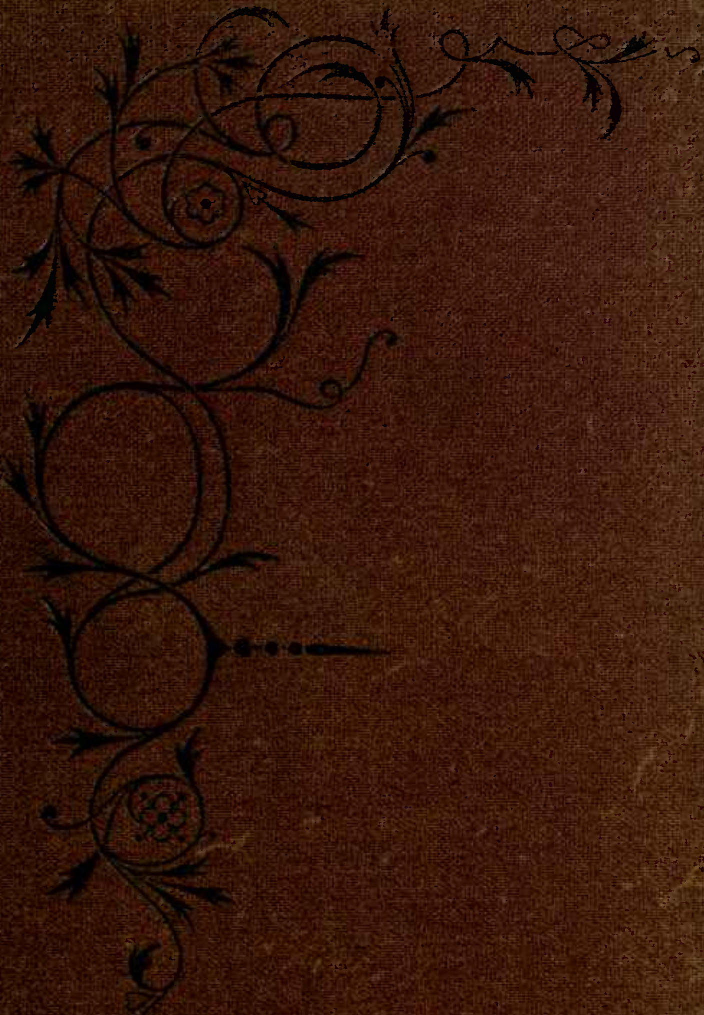

MISS ROBERTS' FORTUNE.

A STORY FOR GIRLS.

BY

SOPHY WINTHROP.

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" By all means use sometimes to be alone.
Salute thyself; see what thy soul doth wear.
Dare to look in thy chest, for 'tis thine own:
And tumble up and down what thou find'st there.

" Dresse and undresse thy soul: mark the decay
And growth of it; if with thy watch, that, too,
Be down, then winde up both, since we shall be
Most surely judg'd, make thy accounts agree.

"All things are busie; only I
Neither bring honey with the bees.
Nor flowers to make that, nor the husbandrie
To water these."

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MISS ROBERTS' FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN I was a little girl, I had a great fondness for oranges; not at all the ordinary liking for that agreeable fruit which exists in every well-balanced infantile mind, but something deeper and more absorbing; so that when I looked forward, as children will, to future glory and affluence, or when, as children will in other moods, I sighed for the unattainable, it was always *orange* of which I thought as the prime cause of the bliss or the despair.

I had a constant sense of other people having oranges when I had none, and a belief that as soon as I left any company oranges were immediately passed around; and I have been captured more than once creeping down stairs in my little night-gown, when I was supposed to be safe in bed, full of the conviction that I should discover the family indulging in this base festivity, and put them to an open shame.

I was telling the girls this as we sat this evening sucking a trio of lovely Havanas, and toasting our feet at the fire. Of course, we all laughed, but since the girls have gone off to their own room I have sat, still sucking a little and looking at the fire, and more serious thoughts have come into my mind.

Of course these ridiculous notions left me years ago, but I am afraid they were the index to a wrong, unlovely habit of mind which did not leave me so long ago—which I am afraid has not *all* left me yet. I should be ashamed to tell any one else but you, dear old padlocked book; but I am really afraid it has not all left me yet.

Somehow it is natural for me still to think of other people as having things that I haven't, and to take it for granted that they are glad to have me out of the way, that they may have their good times without me. For instance, to-night, though we four girls have had a pleasant evening together, and I have been making a fool of myself with the greatest success for their entertainment, I can't avoid a sense of relief now that they are gone, and a conviction that they are enjoying themselves a great deal better at this moment, sitting curled up on their bed, as I don't doubt they are, eating the mince pie they bought at the bakery in study-hour to-day. Not that I feel very much cut up about it, or wish in the least that I were one of the party. That is almost the worst of it. The fact is, I am far too willing to sit in my own corner, sucking my own private oranges, and not troubling myself with other peoples' concerns.

Sometimes I do feel a little sorry about it, and sigh with poor Glory McWhirk, "So many good times in the world, and I not in them!"

But this is all wrong, I know, for me, a sensible girl, nineteen years old, with plenty of money and some good friends, and a life of what most girls would consider perfect happiness before me.

To be sure, I am lame and awkward, but long ago I learned what *that* was sent me for; and, besides, I know perfectly well that that fact has no effect whatever on my real position among others, on the liking or disliking of any one whose regard I should care for. So any feeling on that point is mere sensitiveness, and I keep it down pretty well—don't I, good old friend?—

and never let it cloud more than just a moment's sunshine for me.

But on the whole, as I said, I do not feel half troubled enough about these things. I am afraid (to be perfectly honest with myself, and I *will* be so to-night) I take it rather as a compliment than anything else, that Lily and Jennie think me "*such* a queer girl," and feel flattered when they say, "Oh, don't ask Helen, *she* doesn't care anything about such things." In my secret heart (for I *will* be honest—"get thee behind me, Satan") I am apt to think myself rather *superior* to these girls; in fact, to most of the girls I know, because I know my lessons better, I suppose, and have different notions of "fun" from theirs. But am I not just as fond of my kind of fun as they are of theirs, and don't I pursue it just as steadily, and more so? *Superior* to Lily! perhaps I am, but she spent all her afternoons last week in dressing dolls for Mary Green to sell at that church fair. I, excusing myself without the slightest compunction, on the ground that I never had any taste about such things, lay on my sofa reading "Nicholas Nickleby." To be sure, I think Lily ought to have been doing her algebra examples, but that is nothing to the case.

It was good nature, chiefly, that made her dress the dolls, and in that good nature I was wanting.

Superior to Jennie! She is flighty, frightfully overdressed generally, and, according to my usual judgment, shallow; but she cried like a child, Lily told me, when she went to see Sarah Phelps after her mother's death, and comforted and soothed her more than any one else that she saw. I did not go, because I felt as if it would be intrusion for me even to look in upon such grief; and when I saw Sarah next at school, though I felt for a moment like putting my arms around her neck and kissing her, I was afraid it would make her cry, and all the girls were looking on, and my old awkwardness came upon me, and so I only said, "Good morning," in the ordinary way. Now, Sarah steals up to Jennie at every recess, and they walk off together. I can see that she cares nothing whatever about me, and has no idea how truly I pity her, and how my heart aches when I see her little sad face and black dress coming into school.

Yes, my dear, however you may flatter yourself at other times, you shall look the truth in the face to-night, and confess that the lives of these girls you look down upon with contempt or regard with perfect indifference, are, in many respects, sweeter and truer lives than yours.

Perhaps it was not altogether the orange story that set me thinking about these things.

Yesterday I was in my room alone with the door ajar, and heard the young gentleman-boarders — disagreeable creatures, chiefly remarkable for very gay neck-ties and loud voices — talking in their room up-stairs.

"You've got some pretty jolly quails here," said one, probably a visitor.

"Yes; but they're such awful fine ladies you can't have any fun with them," said one of our young men.

"Which of 'em do you like best on the whole, Tom?" he continued, apparently roused to a contemplation of the subject by the visitor's remark.

"Well, I don't know," said Tom (I'm sure I don't know which one Tom is, very likely the one I particularly object to, who sits next me at table, and puts vanilla, or something very like it, on his hair every Sunday morning). "I used to think I liked the lame one best—the others titter and giggle so—and she's got a nice face. But I believe she's more stuck-up than any of 'em. *I* wish Miss Spenser would come back. She was the nicest little thing! She would play for a fellow after dinner, and this one never will, though she plays splendidly; tell you what, I heard her one day when she didn't know it."

"There'll never be anybody like Miss Spenser again," echoed the chorus, dismally. "She used to get up such jolly things! Do you remember that picnic?" and they went off into a general jeremiad on the departure of that altogether remarkable young lady, while I got up and shut my door.

I've heard of this Miss Spenser before. The only remark I remember to have heard Mrs. Green make was, that Mary Spenser was the sweetest girl that ever lived; and our German teacher told me the other day, that he had had only one pupil in this school before (I am going to be honest, I believe, so I will put in the little qualifying word) who had really *mastered* the declensions, and that was Miss Spenser.

I suppose she was one of those favored little beings who have a *faculty* for everything, and who carry a little wand in their hands which turns all hearts into love and charity before them.

Now I, Helen Roberts, am not that sort of girl, and never shall be. I am what people call *reserved.* And so far as this reserve is natural and not too vigorously cultivated by me, I can't help it. So I am not blaming myself for not being Miss Spenser.

Neither do I believe it is my "mission" in Platoville to devote myself to the entertainment of the disagreeable young gentleman-boarders at the Rev. Obadiah Green's "Christian home." So I am not blaming myself for not doing that.

Ah! but if I only had in my heart that sweet flower of charity, its odor would go out to all that are in the house. If I only *did* love more, it *would* come out, unconsciously, without my trying, and would comfort and bless, as love always does, because it is love.

There is such a thing as a "fellowship with hearts," which I could and ought to "keep and cultivate," but now it seems to me so far off and sometimes so distasteful.

There is only one thing that can be the root of this evil fruit. It is an ugly word, but I think it is the true one. It is *selfishness.*

Not that I am always grossly selfish, but it is a way of looking at things through the medium of self; an unloving habit of mind which, like a smoke fills the atmosphere of my heart and keeps out all the free, pure, heavenly airs, and the flowers that will grow only in them.

I remember One who "pleased not Himself." Men *knew* Him that He was love, and by a blessed instinct sore hearts stole close up to Him and were healed and comforted. And so they are doing still, and will do till the end of time.

And I call myself His child—His follower!

. . . .

Helen Roberts wrote these words, sitting by her little round table one winter evening, not a great many years ago. When she had laid down her pen, she bent a very humble head on the writing-desk before her, and sat a long time perfectly still.

The clock ticked loudly on the mantel, and a spent coal occasionally clattered down from the grate to the fender beneath. But Helen noticed nothing outside of her own heart.

When, at last, she lifted her face to the light, something that looked like victory shone out of her eyes.

The orphan girl, very much alone in her mental and spiritual life, was not unaccustomed to quiet moments of looking into her own heart, and watching the good and evil growing there together. But it was seldom that the search went quite so deep, or was quite so painful as to-night.

The padlocked book had been her best friend and *confidante*, yet it was, for the most part, only that medley of selected sentiment in prose and verse, taking scraps of legend and history, and pretty, girlish thoughts all her own, which makes up the mental furniture of all bright and thoughtful girls anywhere from fourteen to twenty.

The danger which Helen had to-night discovered herself to be in was a real one. It had been growing with her, and was, perhaps, fostered by the kind of life she had led. But that best Friend who watches all our lives and cares so infinitely more than we do, that they should be right and good, was watching hers; and gradually, and by one of those simple ways which He often uses, He had called her attention to the fact. Very likely she did not fully understand it yet. Perhaps she exaggerated some of its features, and left others quite as important unnoticed. But the warning was before her. As we know her better we shall see how she heeds it.

You would have thought Helen a pretty picture as, after locking the faithful volume, she stood for a moment, the seriousness not yet gone from her face, leaning on the mantel and looking down into the fire. But when she moved to cross the room, the lameness and awkwardness of which she had spoken appeared. There was a sudden plunge forward, a quick effort at recovery, and sometimes a grasp at whatever article of furniture stood nearest to help regain the lost balance. It was painful to see at first, and you felt sorry for her. But the clear, brown eyes looked straightforward, and there was even now, and it grew upon her in later years, an unconsciousness of anything unusual or painful that, to those who loved her, had almost the charm of grace. As she went about the room her face grew brighter, and when she turned down the kerosene lamp and let the winter starlight in, she was singing softly to herself the new song her music teacher had given her that afternoon: "But the Lord is mindful of his own; He remembers his children."

"We scatter seeds with careless hand,
And dream we ne'er shall see them more :
But for a thousand years
Their fruit appears,
In weeds that mar the land,
Or healthful store."

CHAPTER II.

ON the broad main street of Platoville stood the old red brick academy, famous in those parts as the center of elegant learning. Around the sacred edifice was a patch of earth never green and now browny-white with frequent snows and incessant ball-playing. This was crossed at every possible angle by narrow paths of slightly deeper hues than the general surface, all converging to the rheumatic and much bewhittled door. Inside the gloomy portal were to be found respectable recitation rooms and a light and not unpleasant school-room, but the outer aspect of the noble institution was, to put it at the mildest, truly venerable. Opposite the academy stood the "orthodox" church, flanked by the Baptist, and squinted at in a friendly way from an acute angle by the modest Methodist structure.

Across the small, three-cornered common, which a little above here divided the street into two, were the drug-store, which contained the post-office, and the shoe-store with the bakery in its rear. The general "emporium" for dry-goods and groceries was a few steps farther up on that one of the streets which kept the name of Main street. The other road passed off peacefully into the snowy country, and between the two, shortly after they parted, lay one or two narrow and modern looking cross streets.

On one of these (which I learn has since taken the name of Maple avenue), stood a row of small white houses, all just alike, even to the curve of the lightning rods on their square cupolas, and the cramped bay windows on their left sides. Everybody knew who lived in the last but one of these houses. And even the stranger, so unfortunate as to be ignorant on this point, "was ware" some time before reaching the mansion, of the characters, blazing in burnished steel, from the big door-plate—"Rev. O. Green."

Pushing back the little gate which barely escaped the steep and narrow steps, you found yourself between two slender Corinthian columns, confronting this same door-plate. The door, when it was opened, barely escaped the front stairs, and if you were not very tall you did not have to dodge the second story in making the ascent. A general odor of cod-fish and fried pork pursued you up-stairs and lingered in the shadowy recesses of the upper hall.

As to this upper hall, the architect had had the best of intentions, and had introduced a merry little parti-colored window on the way up-stairs, but the present occupants of the house were enemies to flies and all creatures that loved light, and had nailed a thick green paper over this one bright spot. Only one ghastly ray of blue light now crept in, and that was through a small orifice made by the irreverent finger of one of the young gentleman-boarders. The rooms of the second story, with one exception, were taken this winter by a party of young ladies from the city of X——, new-comers in Platoville. Helen Roberts paid a liberal bonus for the unwonted privilege of occupying the small front chamber alone. Out of its windows lay the broad, white country, checked off by rows of brown trees, and beyond a range of blue, snowy hills, over which the sun came every morning. The back room, commanding the academy and the churches, was occupied by Helen's cousin, Lily Wood, and her particular friend, Jennie Osborne. Dora, Lily's sister, aged thirteen, was the proud occupant of the little room opening out of it, just big enough to contain a bed and a picture.

What freak of fortune should have sent these four city girls to winter in that inclement village, was a question which might have interested the curious, and which, in fact, did puzzle some of the less wise heads of Platoville itself. But when a papa and mamma *must* go to Europe with their eldest daughter, and there are three incumbrances to be disposed of, what is to be done? And when Madame de Molière, to whom they are forthwith taken in a body, is "*more* than full already, my dear lady, and *positeefly* cannot promise a single vacancy before next July," what but a very disconsolate and unsettled party must that be that leaves her door to take the train for nowhere, and wait for something to turn up? And, under these circumstances, when the Rev. Obadiah Green, in the peaceful pursuit of his travels and his duty, (and having gathered from the conversation of the party something of their situation,) falls into discourse with Mr. Wood, and, in the course of conversation, hands him one of his little cards, setting forth the attractions of his " Christian home for young persons desirous of pursuing a course of study at the well-known academy of Platoville," what, I say, under such circumstances, is more natural than that the result which we have already contemplated should come to pass?

" Why, Matilda, here is just the very thing for us," says Mr. Wood, introducing the Rev. Obadiah to a short parley with his pretty wife.

" Yes, indeed, how fortunate we are!" reiterated that graceful lady, leaving the gentlemen to drop into the seat back of the girls, and laying her pretty little braceletted wrist lightly over Lily's shoulder.

" Girls, I think you are to be congratulated. Such a nice, quiet place—*so* much better than a fashionable boarding-school. I shall feel perfectly easy about you. Now there is nothing to be done but for me to take the train for home at Springfield—yes, I'll see about Jennie's coming, dear—and your father will go with you and see you nicely settled at Mr. Green's."

" Be sure and make Jennie come, won't you, mother?" said Lily, a trifle dismally.

" Yes, I will. I'll see Mrs. Osborne this evening. You trust me for that." And she kept her promise.

"We have found *such* a nice place for the girls, Mrs. Osborne—a good, quiet, Christian family, and the school close by. Lily will be perfectly happy if you will only let Jennie go, too. Dora is so young, you know, and Helen—well, she's a fine girl, you know—a very fine girl, but she's so quiet, and she can't go out as much as Lily likes to, and the fact is—you *will* let Jennie go, won't you?"

While this matter was being settled, the girls were still on their way up into the dreary north. The October night grew chilly, and darkness came down over the hills. The two gentlemen sat opposite the girls, their hats jogging up and down together in a friendly way in the now almost deserted car.

"Well, sir," said the man of business, after several vain attempts to come to terms, "now if you will be so kind as to name your price."

"The price—ah—yes," said the Rev. Obadiah, who had been meditating on this very subject ever since he first fell in with the party. "Though I regard it as one of the minor considerations, yet it is one of those things which—a—, the fact is, I am accustomed to view this matter so much in the light of—a—if I may say—benevolence—"

"Yes, yes, Mr. Green, I appreciate your delicacy, sir, and your—your benevolence, but what is your regular price for board?"

Mr. Green smiled. "Indeed, sir, as I was remarking—that is the very point, sir—indigent young persons in the pursuit of—a—"

"But we are not indigent young persons, sir. We expect to pay a fair price and get a fair article, as we say in trade, sir. Now, what will you take this party for?"

The merchant was beginning to be a little nettled, and inclined to think it rather hasty of Matilda (Matilda always *was* hasty) to decide this matter without more consideration.

"They will take three rooms, did you say, sir?—and, being from the city, they will probably require some privileges which—a—really, I hardly know what to say, sir."

"Well, what do you say to twelve dollars a week?" said Mr. Wood, getting desperate. "Will that do?"

Mr. Green's regular price was seven dollars. He looked at the merchant warily from under his spectacles. "Well—sir,—a—perhaps you did not intend to include washing, sir?"

"Well, no; washing extra, if you say so."

Mr. Green took another wary look. "Now, sir,—it may seem a small matter to you—but to a clergyman, sir, one not rich in this world's goods,—a—if you could say fuel and light extra —(washing, fuel and light, yes, sir. I think that will be all)—a—I think I should be able to accept your terms."

"Very good, sir, very good. We'll consider the matter settled. The money for my daughters will be forwarded to you monthly by my book-keeper. Here is our card, sir. Miss Roberts' guardian is just now in California, but I will make arrangements with his house to have her business attended to,—here is their card, sir—Saxton & Co. Well, girls, pretty tired? We're almost there, I believe."

The appearance of our young ladies in Platoville caused a pleasant little breeze of excitement in that quiet community. For a moment the village girls stood aghast in their high waterfalls and last year's hats, but they quickly recovered themselves, in the eager pursuit of the fashions brought by the new-comers. Châtelaine braids went like wildfire through the school, and last year's hats took on an upper story and French roof in a marvelously short time.

The gravest of heads turned around to see the city girls walk into church. The demurest of eyes looked with ill-concealed interest at their rich dresses and pretty waving plumes.

They were scrutinized and questioned by old ladies around the stove, at the church-door. They were discussed at sewing society. Their probable wealth (increased to a fabulous degree), the number of their dresses, and the quality of their under-clothing (as ascertained from the washerwoman), were revealed and commented on. Their lightest sayings and doings were reported by the school-girls.

A few, indeed, frowned upon them and their finery, and bewailed the day that had brought such frivolity before the eyes of Platoville youth. But even they turned around in the street to count the ruffles on their dresses. A few were scornful, and wished them to know that they knew something of city ways, too, and invited them to their houses to show them that they had Brussels carpets and pianos as well as city folks. But these poor little hearts burned with a bitter discontent and envy which the innocent causers never suspected.

Nobody in the village was really indifferent to them. The apothecary left his mortar, with a smile, to hand out their letters and papers, and the grocer felt an uncommon sense of elevation after they had been in, with their free, pretty ways, to buy a few apples, or a comb.

Not because they were handsome, not because they were famous, not because they were rich, were these things so, but because they carried with them that nameless grace that marks the city-bred.

At the time our story commences, the girls had begun to feel quite like old inhabitants of Platoville. They had experienced all the heights and depths of homesickness, and settled down into a philosophic resolve to get all the fun they could out of the winter. Christmas and New-Year's had passed, made endurable by a generous box from Jennie's mother. They had formed a few acquaintances,—the Phelps, who were not rich, but were well-bred; the Johnsons, who were richer, but not so well-bred. Probably there were many whom they would have been proud to call friends, if there could only have been a mutual opening of eyes, if the city girls could have seen through the homely exterior so new to them, and the rustics could have seen through the poplins, and velvets, and feathers. They were all some years older before they knew how real a lady it was Sarah Phelps took them to see one day, who did not look at their dresses nor question them about their relatives, but sat in her calico dress talking pleasantly to them, showing them her only rarities, the magnificent roses and callas in her window, and then got tea right before them, in the same room—the delicious farmer's tea—rye bread and Dutch cheese, mince pie, baked apples and cream—while her husband, just come in from some out-door work, warmed his big, hard hands before the fire, and looked over the weekly paper.

At home, in the Green establishment, the girls could never feel, and that family long remained more or less of a problem to them, unique in their observation and experience. Mr. Green was said to be an "agent," but if that word means what from its derivation one might suppose it to mean, it is far from expressing what seemed to be the distinguishing feature of that gentleman's calling. About once a month he "traveled," in the phrase of the family, but for what purpose was not definitely known. Jennie Osborne, who confessed to great curiosity on this point, never found any one who could tell her. The greater part of the remaining time he spent, in a flowery dressing-gown, reading the "Herald of Evangelical Freedom," in the warm corner of his sitting-room, and imparting wisdom to the young persons committed to his care.

At the table, he dealt out lofty sentiments, as he did the meat and vegetables in well-considered quantities, and in the midst of almost unbroken silence on the part of the recipients of his favors.

Mrs. Green's voice was seldom heard on these festive occasions, except in a hoarse whisper behind her apron to the distracted maid-of-all-work "Lucindy." She always appeared at the table in close pursuit of the beef-steak, flushed and tired-looking, and the girls, if they thought of her at all, felt sorry for her. Otherwise, she was chiefly known to the up-stairs community by the distant sound of beating eggs and the occasional audible difference of opinion between herself and Bobby, the youthful scion of the house of Green.

Mary, the daughter, was an unhappy maiden of fifteen, who wore the cast-off bows of the young lady-boarders, and envied them their other privileges. At this period her life was made a burden to her by Bobby's unremitting mischief, by her mother's peevish and ill-timed but just complaints of her laziness, and by her father's moral lectures — most of all by a lively sense of these and all the discomforts of her home. Let us hope that better things may come to the poor child with coming years and wisdom.

The little house, which might have made a pleasant home for a family of five, was forced to shelter nearly four times that number. Every room was full except the front parlor, which was sacred to shadows. The long table stood cornerwise in the cramped and gloomy dining-room. The piano stepped out bluffly in the way of all passers through the sitting-room, confronted by the stove; and the sofa and the centre-table, and even Mr. Green's rocking-chair, were pushed ingloriously into a corner.

It was matter of profound mystery to the boarders where and how the Green family spent the night.

The favorite theory, however, in regard to Mr. Green was that he sat in state in the flowery dressing-gown imparting wisdom from the rocking-chair.

" Come, my soul, awake, 'tis morning,
Day is dawning
O'er the earth ; arise and pray ,
Come, to Him who made this splendor,
Thou must render
All thy feeble powers can pay."

' Be useful where thou livest, that they may
Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still.
Kindnesse, good parts, great places are the way
To compasse this. Find out men's wants and will,
And meet them there. All worldly joys go lesse
To the one joy of doing kindnesses."

CHAPTER III.

THE morning after her long conference with the padlocked book, Helen lay waiting for Lucindy to come and make her fire, and watching the light creep over the hills. The remains of last night's feast were on the table near her, and gradually—as gradually and softly as daylight stole into the room, the thoughts that had been in her mind before she went to sleep came back to her. They were something brightened, though, by the wonderful spring and hopefulness of morning.

She was more forgiving to herself than she had been last night; more just, perhaps. At any rate she was braver and happier. She was not conscious of any particular good resolutions. But she was an honest girl. She had found herself in a great mistake. There was only one thing for an honest girl to do.

When Lucindy came in, it seemed easier to speak to her pleasantly—sometimes she forgot to speak to her at all—and when she heard the girls laughing in their own room she felt inclined to laugh too. It was not yet very light nor very warm in the little house when the breakfast-bell sounded through the narrow halls. Helen looked in upon the girls before she went down. Lily was braiding Dora's hair, at the same time distractedly reciting snatches of her French verbs, with frequent references to the open book on the bureau before her. Dora herself, with a troubled countenance, was working out her Latin sentences, slowly and somewhat jerkingly, owing to the savage pulls that Lily, in her own zeal for learning, was inflicting on her poor hair. Jennie, in the earliest stages of preparation for breakfast, was in the act of tossing her geometry to the ceiling when Helen opened the door, but changing her attitude in an instant, stood solemnly up before the two scholars and delivered a few remarks in Mr. Green's most impressive manner on the blessed effects of early rising and habits of punctuality in all the walks of life. Helen laughed and went on. She was an early riser by nature, and gave herself no credit for habits of punctuality.

On the stairs she encountered Miss Peck and

Miss Smith who inhabited (by what distribution of themselves or their effects no one could guess) the very little room at the end of the hall. They were two faithful, hard-workings girls who taught school in their several villages during the summer, and in winter drank deep of the fount of wisdom at Platoville. This was their third winter at Mr. Green's. Thus patiently and laboriously they were getting their education, "fitting themselves for usefulness," as they said. They both eschewed the prevailing mode of dress. Miss Smith had spectacles and short curls. Miss Peck wore her hair drawn solemnly back from her plain, pleasant face, and fastened in a little knot behind.

"Those examples all came right," said Miss Smith after the good mornings.

"Did they? I'm very glad."

Helen remembered now that Miss Smith had tapped at her door yesterday and asked her help on some puzzling algebra problems.

"But we worked almost three quarters of an hour on that one about the hands of a clock," said Miss Peck, with an air that called for sympathy.

Helen had forgotten all about that particular problem, but she smiled.

"I always remember the one about the Madeira and Teneriffe, because it puzzled me so when I went over the book."

"You must come and see me sometimes, when you have n't problems to do," she added pleasantly, as they reached the dining-room door. "I have some new views of California that you might like to see."

"Thank you. It is so improving to see views of natural scenery," said Miss Smith.

"You have had so many advantages," murmured Miss Peck, with a wistful look in her eyes.

"Those girls are perfectly hungry for what I've had all my life, and what hundreds of girls throw away every day. What a queer world this is," thought Helen, touching on a question which has puzzled many another philosopher.

On the evening of the celebrated Church Fair, Helen astonished the girls by appearing at their door with her hat and jacket on.

"You don't mean to say that you are going," said Lily. "I thought you thought it would be a 'dreadful bore.'"

"That was an insult to Platoville that I did n't intend," said Helen, flushing at the remembrance of her foolish little speech. "Yes'm, I'm going. I don't know why I should n't see the fun as well as my young and frisky cousins."

"That's jolly," cried Dora, who was lacing her boots in her own little room.

In a few minutes they were in the low, white-walled "vestry," among the usual variety of dolls and book-marks, pincushions and old women who lived in shoes.

They filled their arms with things that they didn't want, and patronized the cake and candy tables to a degree that threatened to undermine their constitutions. They had their fortunes told, and were pursued by small boys with letters, on which they paid enormous postage. They yielded to the blandishments of the ladies of the "Old Folks' Kitchen," but resisted the baked beans and mush and milk when they got there.

They raffled recklessly, and Dora drew the bed-quilt, which she was only too thankful to return at once to be re-raffled for by other reckless creatures.

Helen brought a smile to Mary Green's unhappy face, by insisting that she should join their party when they went into the infant-class room to partake of some very lumpy ice cream. She afterwards thought that she might have made Miss Smith and Miss Peck happy in the same way, or in some other. But it was too late. The two girls had slipped quietly out when the clock pointed to nine, with peaceful hearts and consciences. They had bought nothing, but each had laid out the fifteen cents admission fee, all that they felt able to give, for the good of the cause.

"Well, it's a little better than nothing," said Lily going home.

"So it is," said Helen, whose "nothing," however, was not quite the same as Lily's.

"The idea of my drawing that horrid bed-quilt," said the disgusted Dora.

Jennie was behind them, flirting desperately with the minister's son, who was home from college on his winter vacation, and had first seen the stylish young lady through his eye-glass that evening. Helen had not enjoyed herself much. She had not expected to. She had left Kate Nickleby, just arrived, at the Mantalini's, and was anxious to pursue the acquaintance of that interesting family. Nevertheless, she was glad she had gone.

"Now, don't go poking off to your own room.

Come in and have a friendly piece of cake," said Lily, after they had climbed the steep stairs in the dark.

"No more cake to-night," cried Helen and Dora in chorus, but Helen came in and sat down on the edge of the bed. Between the fear of going away too soon, and of staying so long as to be dull, and stupid, and "queer," she didn't quite know what to do.

"I am really very tired, and sha'n't stay up very long anywhere. But what are we to do with all these things? Dora, my dear, will you accept a *pincushion?* This stuffed doll is a beautiful object. I don't know exactly what it is intended for, but I should think it might make a useful pincushion. Here is a bronze slipper also, with a high heel, and buckle, and all the fixings. It is evidently intended for a needle-book and pincushion. By the way, I wonder if Lucindy's heart wouldn't warm towards this."

And when Jennie came in to exhibit her purchases and tell the tale of her evening's triumphs, Helen slipped away to her own room, and was very little missed.

It was Saturday morning, and snowing as usual. The girls had put on their rubber boots and waterproofs, and tramped off to get the mail and lay in a stock of candies and fruits to last over Sunday. Helen sat at the window, her cheeks resting on her hands, looking up, as children do, into the air, made gray and blinding by the falling flakes. But presently she took her work-basket from the table close by, and fell to mending a glove.

The room was in its Saturday morning confusion and dreariness, waiting for Mrs. Green, who on these occasions was accustomed to bring up fresh sheets and, with a rueful countenance, help Lucindy make the beds. Before long a heavy step was heard on the stairs, and, bringing the airs of the kitchen on her garments, the lady entered. Helen never *could* talk to Mrs. Green. She tried now to think of the right thing to say, but her efforts were not crowned with success, and the work proceeded, for the most part, in silence. But when it was done, that lady astonished Helen by sitting down plumply on the lounge opposite her, and beginning to talk herself.

"You was a sayin' that you wanted another practice-hour?" she began.

Helen admitted the fact.

"Well, Mr. Brown, one of the young gentlemen, he's goin' to take singin' lessons, and his teacher can't come only at four o'clock in the afternoon." That was the time Helen had spoken of. "If you had jest as lieves practice in the evenin', why, 'twould accommodate," pursued Mrs. Green.

The boarders at Mr. Green's were always "encouraged" to take their lamps and spend the evening in the sitting-room. On such occasions the family lamp was put out and set in the closet, and the head of the family (to borrow the language of the *card*) "exerted a parental influence over the young persons committed to his charge, by assisting them in their studies or superintending them in some elevated form of amusement." But the young ladies from the city had set the evil example of remaining in their rooms, and the other boarders, with one consent, had followed.

"But that is the only time when you have the room to yourself," said Helen at last, feeling that she must say something, but quite conscious that this was not the only nor uppermost reason for disliking the proposed arrangement. It was only the one which in a series of mental objections she had just reached.

"Oh, I always like to hear the pianner goin'!" returned Mrs. Green; "and *he* don't mind it, either," referring to Mr. Green, who was at present "traveling," hence the unusual circumstance of his wife having anything to say about business. Helen did want the extra hour. Music was almost the only thing she was making much progress in this winter, and all the time she could give to that was well spent. But she was a very particular young woman as to the circumstances under which she practiced. By a judicious and persistent use of chromatics and five-fingered exercises, she had succeeded in making Mr. Green take his daily walk during her morning hour, and between one and two she was comparatively at peace, the boarders being all off at afternoon school, and Mr. Green exercising his parental duties and privileges in making the tour of the young gentlemen's rooms.

"We'll leave it this way, if you please, Mrs. Green," she said at last. "I will come down in the evening whenever I need the practice very much, but we won't call it a regular thing. And whenever it isn't convenient for you, you must let me know."

It really did seem to Helen that the unhappy woman must occasionally have a wish in regard to the occupation of her time and her house.

Thus it came about that one evening not long after, Helen, having heard Mr. Green go out to an evening meeting, appeared with her music in the sitting-room. A lively encounter between Mrs. Green and Bobby had been audible through the pipe of the drum a few minutes before, but there was now a lull. Bobby's rebellious little legs were calmly curled up on the sofa, and he slept the sleep of the innocent. Helen did not discover him at once. The only light in the room was a low, flickering candle, on the table in the corner (the kerosene lamp had been put out and locked up in the closet, before Mr. Green's departure). Mrs. Green sat by the table mending a dress for Mary. That young lady herself was in at the next door, ostensibly looking out her map questions with her most intimate friend.

" If you will let Lucinda go up and get my lamp," said Helen, a little hesitatingly ; she fancied it might be embarrassing. " It takes a good deal of light to practice."

" I'll go myself," and Mrs. Green rose with the utmost readiness. " Never mind him," continued that lady, finding Helen contemplating Bobby when she returned. "I guess he won't wake up, and 't won't hurt him if he does."

Helen, it must be confessed, feared the consequences of Bobby's waking more for other people than for himself. She was a little disgusted and inclined to give up the practicing, but with her lamp in Mrs. Green's possession, and that lady stitching away with renewed vigor under its enlivening rays, she was clearly at a disadvantage.

"Well, p'raps he'll wake up of himself if you wait a few minutes," said Mrs. Green, and Helen sat down. Once more she couldn't think of anything to say, and once more Mrs. Green came to her relief.

"Was you always lame?" she began, bluntly.

Helen's face flushed hot a moment at this rudeness, but she looked at the woman's coarse, unconscious face, and tried to realize that the question came from nothing but a kind feeling of interest. She answered as pleasantly as she could,

"No, ma'am, not always."

"Did you have a fall or anything?"

"No; but I was ill a great deal when I was a child."

"How old was you when your father and mother died?"

"Only a baby," said Helen, wishing she might change the subject.

"And your aunt and uncle have took care of you ever since," said Mrs. Green, concluding her rapid mental sketch of the young lady's life.

"I have lived sometimes with them and sometimes with my guardian, Mrs. Green. Have you always lived in Platoville?"

Mrs. Green was a woman of few words on ordinary occasions, but she was capable of being drawn out almost indefinitely. Helen asked a few questions at first for their own sake, afterwards from a genuine interest, and presently found it unnecessary to ask any questions at all. This coarse and common woman, who seemed allied to the fleshly things with which she chiefly had to do — this grimy, smoky genius of the kitchen, who carried drudgery in every line of her face, and heat, and worry, and bustle in every movement of her burly form — this woman had had a youth. She had had romance in her girl's heart, and tenderness in her woman's breast. It came out oddly enough, in ways that seemed rough and coarse to her auditor, but it did come out, and Helen listened as to a revelation. She told of meeting her first husband many years ago at a singing-school; of the string of beads he gave her one night for a kiss and a promise; of the lover's quarrel that came, and of her walking twenty-six miles in one day to find him and prevent his going off to sea. She told of their happiness in their own little house, and of the two children that were born to them and died; and then she told how he sickened, and how she watched him through the long fever, and then took him to his own home and buried him. Helen thought that all this woman's real life has been buried, too, in that grave.

Mrs. Green's harsh voice shook as she told the story, and her face took on a look that Helen had never suspected it could wear. Of her later life she said nothing, and Helen hadn't the heart to question her about it.

"If I only could have had one of them babies left to me!" the woman cried out, after a pause. "And yet I've thanked the Lord a thousand times that they were all gone."

And she wiped her eyes, pinned her work to her knee in a new place, and stitched away, the every-day look coming back to her face.

Helen, who had read few stories except in books, found the right words farther off than ever before, and Bobby was nestling now, so she went to the piano and played very sweetly a gentle little melody. Bobby beat up the sofa pillow, and raised himself on his elbow to listen, in a wide-awake contentment that lasted longer than might have been expected.

"You play real pretty," said Mrs. Green. "Give us some more!"

So Helen kept on, and gradually got into her regular practice, and by nine o'clock was in her own room again.

One day, a year afterwards, the minister's wife told Mrs. Green that she would like to lend her "The Minister's Wooing," which had just come out in book form.

"What! that one about he that went to sea and she was goin' to marry the minister?" said Mrs. Green. "Why, one of our boarders read that to me! She used to come down to practice when *he* was gone to meetin', and sometimes Bobby was asleep, so she would bring down her paper and read till he woke up. She was a nice girl. I used to think she was proud sometimes but she could be real pleasant, too."

One day a stranger came to Platoville on the eleven o'clock train. He had sent a letter before him to this effect:

"My Dear Child,—I arrived from San Francisco yesterday per steamer *Yucatan.* I shall take the midnight train north Wednesday, and hope to see you for a few hours on Thursday.

"Yours,

"EDWARD SAXTON."

But the letter did not reach Platoville till several hours after the stranger had left it, and Miss Roberts was naturally somewhat surprised when, on coming in from her morning recitations, she was informed that there was a gentleman in the parlor waiting to see her. A handsome rug, and the most elegant of brown leather traveling-bags, lay on the hall floor, and on the little black sofa just within the parlor door, was a rather small, very neat, iron-grey-haired gentleman. Mr. Green sat by his side in the full glory of the flowery dressing-gown, wisdom and benignity fairly bubbling over from his whole aspect.

The small gentleman turned from him and rose with a gentle shake, as if he would have shaken off some of the precious drops of the bubbled-over wisdom. A person of lively imagination might have been reminded, by the act, of a little bird lightly scattering the priceless summer rain from his glossy feathers. Helen came up to the little gentleman and kissed him, with that mixture of shyness and delight which, from a child, she always felt on meeting her guardian.

"You were not expecting me, my dear? I am not acquainted with these northern mails, and didn't calculate for my letter having to go to Bangor, to be sent back to you. 'Pretty well,' are you? We'll see about that in a moment."

Then he took out his watch. "I shall wish to see your room, if you please, my child, and, Mr. Green, will you have the kindness, sir, to procure a comfortable vehicle of some sort to come to the door immediately after dinner?"

Mr. Green was only too happy, and exchanging his long dressing-gown for his long overcoat, and his noiseless slippers for his noiseless over-shoes, stole out of the house.

"Your uncle selected this place for you, and came with you here?" said Helen's guardian, when they were alone, rising to his feet and standing up over her in a somewhat alarming way.

"Yes, sir;" and Helen related the circumstances.

Her guardian made an inarticulate sound for answer, and strode rapidly once or twice up and down the little apartments, kicking one or two loose crickets before him into the shadowy depths of the bay-window, for he was rather a nervous little gentleman. Then, coming back suddenly, he took the awful liberty of raising the front window and throwing the yellow-green blinds wide open. Then he sat down on the sofa and looked into Helen's face. The unwonted blaze of sunlight gave the little room and its stiff finery an astonished and injured look, which Helen remembers to this day, when she thinks of Platoville. The light revealed also the young girl's countenance, and brought out clearly the decided lines about the mouth, the kindly eyes, and rather handsome features of the middle-aged man by her side. His face was one you would have liked to look at, and yet, after looking some time, you might have been quite unable to say what manner of man the possessor of it was. Like all of us, he was many-sided. If you had gone down among the docks and warehouses on Water Street, X——, and asked the merchants there to tell you about him, they would have said,—"Saxton?—he's one of our most solid men. He's a prudent man, a very prudent man; and yet he has a quick eye for a chance. His ventures seldom fail. Edward Saxton's name is a pretty sure sign of success to any scheme. A little too particular, perhaps—a little too afraid of anything that looks like sharp practice or double dealing; but he's a safe man, a very safe man, and has been a very successful one."

If you had gone home to tea with his mild-faced tailor one evening, that same week, you might have heard him remark, across the table, to his well-dressed wife—"Mr. Saxton was in to-day, my dear. Just home from California, and looking well—extremely well. He bought one of that new line of beavers, and ordered his spring over-coat. 'A lovely man,' you think, my dear—a 'lovely man?' Well, I have a great respect for Mr. Saxton, as you well know, Mrs. Button; but I must say that he is a very particular man—a very particular man—extremely so, in fact. I have known him send back a coat—well—as many as five times, to have the set of the sleeves altered, and—though I wouldn't mention it to any one but you, Mrs. Button, I don't know of any gentleman who is more apt to be a little irritable, if his goods are not just what he ordered, or are not sent home at the precise time they are promised."

If you had talked with his pastor about the grey-haired man who had sat before his face, Sunday after Sunday, for many years, and who had been all that time one of the "pillars" of his church, and a promoter of every good and enterprising movement, he might have told you that notwithstanding all his intercourse with him, he felt that he had but little real knowledge of the retiring man; but that once or twice he had met him on the outskirts of the city, "walking at eventide," and that on these occasions he had had deeper talks with him than with any man he knew, that he believed him to be a man of a rare spirit, of very pure life, and of high aim."

If you had gone to certain widows, and to certain struggling clerks, in the city of X——, they might have told you, with tears in their eyes, things that the quiet doer of them would rather I should not set down even here. His housekeeper, who saw, perhaps, more of him in bodily presence than any body else, would have told you that he liked his eggs soft-boiled, and his toast very hot, and that he drank a glass of fresh milk every morning, just as reg'lar as the mornings came. Even Helen, who had spent six months of most of the years of her life in his house, could have told you little about him, except that he was the most generous of guardians, that she was a little afraid of him, and that there was growing in her heart, every year as she grew older, a deep honor for the little man.

"It's more than I can understand! What ever induced Lucy Roberts to put that child under Saxton's care!" Helen's uncle used to say to his wife sometimes. "What does he know about girls? Perfect absurdity! Now, if she had only left her to me, her natural guardian, the girl could have grown up with our daughters, and her property could have gone in with ours, and I could have doubled it a dozen times. Saxton's too careful to do anything with it—keeps it locked up in a strong box, I suppose—and the dear knows what he's going to do with all *his* money, when he dies."

But Lucy Roberts knew Edward Saxton well—perhaps better than any body else had ever known him—and she chose him out of all the men and all the women she knew, to take care of her little girl when she must leave her.

Helen rather feared the effect of a dinner à la Green on her guardian. That ceremony went off very much as usual. The vegetables and the moralities were dispensed with the usual benignant grace. The promiscuously laden plates passed in solemn procession up and down the long row of expectant feasters, who all waited for the uplifted knife and fork of the head of the family before they ventured to appease the clamors of appetite. Lucindy stood lost in thought behind the stove, or recalled by her mistress's awful whisper, made a rush to the further end of the table to pour gravy into the glass of the young gentleman who called for water.

But Mr. Saxton took it all with gravity and equanimity. His nervousness seemed to have disappeared, and he sat quietly observant of Helen and her three friends, or answering as well as he could their girlish questions about home in the intervals of Mr. Green's discourse. He tried to remember how long the Huntington girls had been home from school, but he was not sure where the last sociable met. He resisted steadily Mr. Green's attempts to draw him out, but listened with a grave respect to such of that gentleman's remarks as were specially addressed to him.

After dinner, Deacon Prosy's green sleigh, with a melancholy jingle of small bells, drew up to the door, and Helen in her little brown, fur-edged jacket and the hat with the pheasant's wing, and wrapped in the handsome traveling-rug, showed her guardian the sights of Platoville. They called on the principal of the academy, who was a scholar and a gentleman, and to whom the short interview with the broad-minded and cultivated business-man was a real pleasure. They drew up to the side-walk in front of the store to speak to Professor Koerner. He was the German teacher, melancholy of attire, beaming of countenance, who earned a precarious but happy existence by carving brackets and picture-frames, and giving lessons in his native language in Platoville and the surrounding towns. He had gone home to his patient, blue-eyed wife and eight rosy children with a brighter face than usual when he learned that he was to have an extra class of three young ladies from the city, and a special reading-lesson every day with one of them.

At length, after a short stop at the deacon's door, and the taking in of the deacon's small son as driver elect, the horse's head was turned towards the depot, and they began to listen for the whistle of the down-train.

"Well, my child, I think you will hold out till the end of the year."

There was a slight questioning inflection in the words, nevertheless, and Helen answered, with rather surprised eyes, "Oh, yes, sir."

Somehow Platoville life had almost unconsciously, to her, taken on a different look these last few weeks.

Mr. Saxton looked pleased.

"What will you wish to do at the end of the term? Will you go with your cousins to Chicago or come to me?"

"I would rather come home—to you, sir."

Mr. Saxton looked pleased again.

"Why did n't you tell Dennis to send you the flowers this winter?"

"I did n't think of it, I'm sure."

"I was the thoughtless one. It should have been done. Mitty has been good enough to send old Mrs. Brown a basket full now and then, but otherwise they have been wasting their sweetness. Now, good-bye, my child. No, keep the rug. I bought it for you. I have made arrangements to have the sleigh and this young man here for driver whenever you wish, and a buggy when the snow goes. You must take a drive every day, if possible. If you need anything, tell your guardian."

Helen kissed him good-bye, and thanked him. She would as little have thought of telling him *how much* she thanked him as he would have thought of telling her how glad he was to see his "child" once more, and how he rejoiced at a certain new light that he thought he saw in her eyes.

Perhaps Edward Saxton did know little about girls, but he knew something about souls, and had a quick instinct for reading in faces that which lies beneath the common ken.

He did not open his paper at once on going into the cars, but looked gravely out of the window at the dull, brown and white fields flying faster and faster before him. "Yes, it's going to be a good thing," he said to himself. "Wood was wiser than he knew. I did n't think so at first. The cramped, dismal rooms are bad, the cod-fishy halls are *very* bad, the moral sentiments are not to my taste; but she's getting what she would n't have got anywhere else. Those girls, too,—she needed to be brought nearer to them,—perhaps she will be able to do something for them, and I'm not afraid of their hurting her,—not even that scatter-brained creature of Osborne's."

The breath of the city brought by Helen's guardian threatened to plunge the girls back into their original home-sickness. They all sat that afternoon in a dismal group on Helen's bed, and even the box of lovely candies that the thoughtful little man had taken out of his bag before he left was not equal to the emergency.

Presently Lucindy thrust her head in at the door, unannounced by knock or step, and, in the sepulchral tone learned from her mistress, whispered hoarsely, "Music teacher."

"Oh, dear, I had forgotten all about her," said Helen, starting up.

Helen's music teacher was a blind lady who had been educated at the Perkins Institute in Boston, and now did what she could for the support of herself and her poor old mother by giving lessons in music. She was a plain, unattractive woman, and Helen had seldom thought much about her, except with a vague kind of pity, that made her constrained and almost bashful in Miss Graham's presence, and a sense that she was an unusually good music teacher for a lady.

But to-day she was not in the mood for her lesson, and somehow found herself thinking less of the music and more of the teacher than ever before. She noticed the soft, almost loving touch with which Miss Graham handled the keys when she played the accompaniment to her new song. She looked at her face and thought that, if it were not for the pitiful green glasses, and a somewhat hard and fixed expression which was, perhaps, the result of the long shutting out of pleasure from one entrance, it would be a very pleasant face. The little girl who led Miss Graham to her lessons was late in coming for her to-day, and after the lesson pupil and teacher sat together some minutes waiting.

Miss Graham drew out a roll of music from her muff. "Here is something that came to me by this afternoon's mail. Will you be so kind as to tell me what it is?" Helen read the title: "Whose composition is it? Does it look pretty?"

"Sha'n't I try it for you, Miss Graham?" said

Helen, suddenly. "You know all about my reading, but I'll do the best I can with it."

"Thank you, my dear," said Miss Graham, when she was done. "It is on *A* flat?" and she touched the chord.

"Miss Graham, how do you learn new music?" asked Helen, too much interested for her usual fear of being rude or impertinent.

"My sister, who teaches in Granby, comes home once a month, and then she reads to me all that has been sent while she was gone. After one reading, I can generally manage a piece."

Helen's face flushed quickly. "I do believe I am the most thoughtless, selfish creature that ever lived. Miss Graham, I *wish* you would let me read to you," she said, aloud. "I can do it perfectly well. I can come every day for an hour." She was very much in earnest, and Miss Graham smiled. The look in her face wasn't half as hard and fixed as before.

"Not every day, my dear. I am sure you are too busy for that. But I shall be greatly obliged if you will read a piece to me occasionally. You live next door to the school-house, don't you? I can go in there any time."

Helen was thoroughly interested, and after a pause of a few minutes she ventured to ask, but in quite another tone, "Are the days very dull, Miss Graham?"

"Not very," said the quiet woman. "At least not now. They were at first. I was only twelve years old when I became blind, and it took a long time to get accustomed to it. But mother and I have very nice times together. She reads to me sometimes when her voice is strong enough, and I play a good deal, you know. Here comes Lottie."

Helen went up-stairs considerably better of the home-sickness, but somchow with a wonderfully serious look on her face.

"A man that looks on glasse,
On it may stay his eye;
Or, if he pleaseth, through it passe,
And then the heaven espie."

CHAPTER IV.

IT is a trite observation, but one that occasionally forces itself with special emphasis upon the mind, that the longest period of time does have an end. The girls took a new sense of this truth one day when Dora, waving the almanac triumphantly aloft, informed them that there were only three weeks and two days more to stay in Platoville. Only three weeks, and there were ever so many things to do before they went away. There were the Shakers to visit some Saturday, and the academy belfry to climb into, and the old mill down in the hollow to go to again and make a sketch of.

Since spring had opened Platoville pleasures had increased ten-fold. The deacon's old horse, without the melancholy bells, had come to the door almost every afternoon and helped them find something pleasant. They had thoroughly explored the road that led off into the country in all its branches. They had gathered the loveliest wild flowers over in the belt of woods that could be seen from Helen's window (Dennis had sent a contribution from the green-house at home every week till the arbutus and liverwort came). They had found the most charming places along the quiet, grassy country roads —places where a brook trickled down through moss and over stones and ran along by their sides—openings in the trees, where across acres of sunny fields they saw the range of blue hills, and Saranac behind them with winter still about his head—thick, bushy, green, leafy places, where the branches brushed their cheeks on either side —sometimes places where the genuine forest trees stood up around them and the horse stepped over the soft pine needles.

When the real last days came, and they had shaken hands with the teachers, and promised to write to Sarah Phelps, and see Miss Smith and Miss Peck, with their respective trunks, drive off in the high wagons which their respective brothers sent for them, the girls began to feel that vague sense of loss and sickness of heart that comes with the breaking up of almost any familiar state of life, be it joyous or grievous.

Their winter was the more thoroughly ended and broken up because they themselves were to separate. Lily and Dora were to go to their uncle in Chicago, to stay till Mr. and Mrs. Wood should come home, or send further instructions in regard to them. Jennie Osborne, after a brief stop at home, was to join her mother at Saratoga. Helen was going home to X——.

They went off by the earliest train. Mrs. Green was up and had a hot breakfast for them. "We shall miss you," she said, wiping her face with her apron, before she kissed them good-bye. Mr. Green was borne up by a strong conviction that they would all return in the autumn to complete their academical course, and the girls were quite too sure of his mistake to care to contradict him. Lucindy was tearful and jealous, and when the coach came back for Lily's shawl, which had been left behind, rushed wildly upstairs and brought down the old red table-cover.

At Springfield, Lily and Dora, being met by the gentlemanly clerk sent on for the purpose, took the western train.

"Old girl, I wish you were going too," said Lily, always soft-hearted at parting, and the two girls laid their pretty cheeks together for a moment. Dora was in spirits beyond the power of parting to affect, but she was really more fond of her cousin than Lily was. Jennie, in deep dejection and sobs, drew down her veil, closed her blind, and spread herself out on the deserted seat. In less than ten minutes Helen heard her chatting gayly with a perfect stranger, in yellow kids and yellow moustache, in the seat behind her. Before the ten minutes had passed, the seat by Helen's side was quietly taken by a small, elegant, iron-gray-haired gentleman.

"*Oh*, isn't this splendid!" said Helen, with a very bright face, when turning her eyes from the river she had been watching, she first discovered him. After that, she hadn't a thought of book, or bag, or bundle, or of Eastville Junction, where they were to change cars again, and where both she and Jennie had been very sure they should take the wrong train and go back to Platoville. Everything was quietly taken care of by this little gentleman, who was the most perfect of travelers.

Before they reached X——, Helen and Jennie began to say their last words, and as we shall see little of Jennie in the days to come; perhaps we, too, had better say good-bye now. The two girls met in a shop or on the street a few times during the next two or three years, and when Helen was visiting in Chicago she received some pink-tinted wedding cards, and learned that Jennie had married a very wealthy widower with six children.

When the trains drew up at last in the old, familiar, smoky, dingy, disgraceful depot of the lovely city of X——, there was Peter, grown several shades blacker, Helen was sure, and the black horses, and the glossy carriage which Mr. Saxton had had newly lined with very dark brown satin, "to match Peter, I suppose," said Helen.

It was altogether delicious to wake the next morning and become gradually conscious that the summer morning breeze was coming in through soft, lace curtains and not from under the little flapping paper shade—to look dreamily about the spacious, high-ceiled room and realize, though feebly at first, that there was no danger of knocking the inkstand off the round table if an elbow was thrust out of bed.

It was so delightfully lazy and luxurious, and Helen, it must be confessed, was very fond of laziness and luxury, to lie and look at herself in the long mirror opposite, cushioned among the piles of soft, white things, and canopied by delicate lace; and the crimson silk coverlet, carelessly thrown over the foot of the bed, was such an elegant contrast. It was even delightful to hear the newsboy crying the morning paper. Helen listened with interest to each particular rise and fall of his voice as he came up the avenue, past the house, and round the corner down the next street, and lazily wondered if it were the same freckly, merry-faced boy, or if the vocal parts of all newsboys were precisely alike.

Mr. Saxton was always late in breakfasting, and there was plenty of time to begin to unpack her trunk and scatter things about the floor; to begin a letter to Lily, and to look over her precious books and "things" in the little room opening out of her bed-room, and decide what she must send for over to Uncle Roger's right after breakfast.

Down-stairs everything was pleasant, too. The long windows were open on to the green grass. Mr. Saxton, who hated pretensions, would not have it called a lawn; but it was as soft and smooth as velvet, and went off in a broad sunny slope towards the green-houses and the barn. Dennis had set out some of the larger plants in smiling rows against the hedge, and a few fragrant ones stood in clusters close by the open windows.

Coffee was altogether such a different thing out of the delicate porcelain cups; and Mr. Saxton at his end of the table, and Mitty at hers, were two as pleasant people to see as one often meets at breakfast.

Twenty years ago, before there were any gray in his hair, Mr. Saxton had bought this handsome house on the avenue and fitted it up in nearly its present style. Many were the conjectures among the polite of X—— as to the reasons for this movement, but nothing more astonishing happened than that he continued to live there with his housekeeper and servants till he was comparatively an old man. He seldom entertained company, in the ordinary meaning of that phrase, but sometimes one or two pale-cheeked book-keepers would board with him during the summer months; and when poor clergymen or foreign missionaries were in town, they were very apt to be found "putting up" at Mr. Saxton's.

Mrs. Submit Cook, always known as Mitty, had been a sempstress in the Saxton family before and after the death of the lamented Mr. Cook, and came to Mr. Edward soon after he took this house. It was Helen's opinion that he got her as he did the pictures and the bronzes, as an ornament. With her rippling gray hair, her delicate face, her black dress, and the white lace folded across her bosom, she was gentility itself; and though she seldom uttered a sentence without egregiously insulting her mother tongue, she was blessed to such a degree with the grace of silence, and had such pretty manners, that she was universally admired.

After breakfast, Helen went with her guardian into the front room, peculiarly his own, and called by the servants the library, and there saw him brush his hat and put on his gloves, and received her quarterly allowance. His words were brief, for the carriage already stood at the door to take him down to the docks.

"You had better take a drive this morning, my child. Mitty will be charmed to go with you and show you the novelties. I shall be home to dinner at five."

By ten o'clock, they were bowling along the broad avenue in the open carriage *en route* for "Haberdasher's." Here, after feasting her eyes on the piles of sweet, fresh, summery-looking things, and buying a lovely lilac cambric spotted with daisies, and a blue and white organdy, and uncounted ribbons, Helen went to another part of the store, and, after much consultation with Mitty, made some rather different-looking purchases.

These she caused to be done up in a stout, square, business-like bundle by the obliging clerk, and the same assiduous youth was only too happy to bring pen and ink to the counter that she might direct it herself.

Those collars and cuffs won't fit *him* anyway, and I don't believe *he'll* want a black alpaca dressing-gown," said the young lady to herself, with an air of satisfaction, as she made the last flourish with the stiff steel pen. And when they went out she told Peter to go next to the express office.

"Now, Mitty, are we through?"

"Air you going to "Mechlin's for anything?" said Mitty, gently.

"No, I was n't; but we can, of course."

"I only thought I'd like to have you look at some collars they have there. They're imitation of some kind of lace—'Mohammedan,' seems to me they call it -——"

"Oh, Mitty," said Helen, wickedly, "not 'Mohammedan'—you mean 'Hottentot,' don't you?"

"Well, I guess that is it. I never remember these queer names. They're pretty, and cheap too. I thought of getting one for Sarah Jane."

"I'd have one by all means," said Helen, "Yes, Peter, to 'Mechlin's' next."

Sarah Jane was Mitty's married daughter, for whom and for whose children, this softest-hearted of grandmothers lived and had her being. Many were the cunningly-devised garments and the boxes of sweetmeats that went from the housekeeper's room to the neighboring city where Sarah Jane lived.

X—— was lovely through the early June days, but one morning, when Helen came down in a white muslin wrapper, and Mitty put ice in her tea, and even Mr. Saxton fanned himself with his newspaper, everybody began to think of the sea-side. It had been arranged that Helen and Mitty should go down to Siloam through the warm weather, and that Mr. Saxton, who rarely left his business even in summer, should spend a Sunday with them when he could.

Helen loved nothing as she did the sea, but she had always gone to it before subject to the restrictions of her fashionable aunt and cousins. This time she meant to enjoy it with all her heart, and was eager to go. She would have urged it before, but for a feeling of reluctance to go away so soon again from her guardian, whose wise and thoughtful kindness to her she was beginning to notice more and more, and to bless him for. But now when he spoke of going, there was no mistaking what her face said about it.

"Your rooms are waiting for you. There is no reason why you should n't go to-morrow. You can begin to pack to-day, my dear, and if my observations have been correct, to a young lady, packing is half the pleasure of going."

Helen did pack that very morning. She put in her sketching material (which were never taken out of the trunk through the whole summer) — a few books — her "Earthly Paradise," which her guardian had just given her—the padlocked book (which remained with the sketch-book at the bottom of the trunk all summer—a little limber Testament that would go in her pocket, and an old copy of Thomas à Kempis. For this last, she had spent a whole morning at her Uncle Roger's deserted house, hunting among her mother's old books.

For the first few days at the sea-side Helen was supremely happy. She could keep on her buff linen dress from breakfast till bed-time if she chose, and sit on the rocks all day long. She cared for nothing, thought of nothing but the bounding, dashing water at her feet. Years afterwards, sitting on those same rocks, somebody told her (foolishly enough, as the strong-minded reader will observe), that he was jealous of only one thing in this world, and that was the sea. She loved it as something akin to her.

"It is so restless—it is so like me," she would think. "It is always struggling so—battering away at these rocks—falling back defeated—coming up again with sunshine on its forehead. It has such a double nature—clapping its hands in glee—moaning a perpetual sadness. Never still—never satisfied. Oh, sea, oh, sea, when shall we both lie still together? There is only one Voice that can bid us be calm. And yet God's sunlight shines upon it so. Such wealth of brilliancy he pours out upon it—such depths of his own heaven's blue he mirrors in it, and the stars shine down into its very heart."

Under her little brown umbrella (if she thought to put it up), all sorts of fresh, sweet, strengthening things came into her mind. Little songs would sing themselves there. They never got on to paper, probably they were not worth it. But they would go on in her head for days together in pretty musical numbers. And with all the other things—the sunshine, the airs, the books, in her pocket and in her mind, the lives she knew something of, the life she knew most about down in her own heart, the wishes that would come and were hard to put down, the longings, the hopes—with all these things they did the work whereunto they were sent. For back of the soft, brown eyes and the white forehead there was going on something just as wonderful and just as beautiful as goes on under the brown earth when spring rains and sunshine are sent down upon it.

Mitty did not share the pleasures of the watcher by the sea. With her back to the water (the glare hurt her eyes), she stitched little red merino frocks and ruminated peacefully.

"I don't see, for my part, what pleasure there is in setting out there on those rocks in the blazing sun, and getting tanned as brown as a berry.

There's that child. I should think she'd a great deal rather take a little sewing, or a book sometimes, and set down in the house. She does take a book out there, but I don't see as she ever opens it. But she ain't the only one that does so. There are troops of 'em that come from the city every day and seem to *like* to set still for hours and poke their parasols into the sand. And that woman that sets opposite us at the table. She puts on the awfullest looking old hat every day and goes off into the woods, and never comes back till bathing time, and then she goes in looking like Sancho Panzy, with all the rest of them. I don't see what folks want to make themselves look so for. And for my part, I think it's a great deal more convenient, besides being more decent, to wash yourself in your own room."

After dinner, Mitty would be persuaded to lay aside her work and sit on the veranda, the picture of contented respectability.

Helen was always proud of the gentle-faced, gray-haired woman, but their dialogues were sometimes of a funny description.

"Isn't that lovely?" Helen would say, sitting on a low seat by Mitty's side, her cheeks resting on her hands, and her eyes on the little ship just rounding the point with the sunset on its sails.

"Yes, I was jest a thinking that you might have your old blue silk fixed up so. There's plenty of it. Two whole breadths that ain't gored at all?"

A pretty little steamer plied daily between the hotel and Siloam light-house. Troops of people went over every day, and Helen heard them saying what a charming sail it was through the Needle islands and along the shore. The rocks at the lighthouse, too, were very fine, and there was a sort of whirlpool, wonderful to see. Helen conceived a desire to go over there some day, but Mitty demurred.

"Steamboats smell so, and if you set out on deck you get cinders all over your clothes. And there's nothing tans like the reflection from the water."

Helen tried to give up gracefully. She could be happy on her rocks forever, yet she felt that her capacity for happiness might admit of a wider range of objects. She had a pleasant word occasionally with some of the guests, but she was not of the kind to make acquaintance easily, and besides, all the parties were complete in themselves, and did n't want her. So she still sat under the brown umbrella, with pleasant thoughts for company.

Sometimes she would look a little wistfully at the long lines of merry bathers. Sometimes she would gaze off into the woods beyond the "neck," "but that is probably a great deal farther off than it looks, and I should get very tired, and, besides, I ought not to go so far from Mitty," she always concluded. "At least we might take a drive," she thought, one day, and forthwith made the proposition. "It's awful wheeling in the sand, you know," said Mitty, serenely, "and, besides, what is there to see?—nothing but sand, and rocks, and water."

"That's a pretty apron you're making, Mitty," answered Helen, somewhat irrelevantly, (possibly bethinking herself that it might be agreeable to Mitty to have somebody show some interest in her favorite pursuits.)

"Yes, I think it is. Would you make it with them things—*brocatels*, I believe they call 'em—over the shoulders?"

"I certainly should," said Helen.

It was a resource to watch the people, There were the usual varieties—the snobs, male and female; the maids and matrons, standing in ruffles up to their chins, and looking as if another curl would kill them. These were they who breakfasted in their rooms, spent the best part of the gorgeous August day under the hairdresser's hands, came out of the chrysalis of dinner, promenaded religiously for an hour after on the broad verandas, and spent the night in hops. Then there were the stiff, solemn people, who seemed to come here from a grim sense of duty, and made a dismal protest against the follies of fashion, by making themselves as ugly as possible. There were anxious-looking mothers with sickly babies, that were taken out struggling, to be dipped two or three times a day. These were the ones to whom Helen always wanted to say something, but seldom dared to. There were a few of the free, sensible people who did as they pleased, and were happy. The most attractive of these, to Helen, was a cheery, bustling little woman who sat nearly opposite them at table. She seemed to have no special connection with anybody, though she was on familiar terms with a widow lady and a fair, light-haired girl, who sat next her. The girl called the cheery little lady Miss Maria. She was such a business-like little lady. Piles of letters came to her every morning, and she would look them over, and assort them, and make little notes on the backs of them with astonishing despatch. She tore open her newspaper like a man, and would know all there was in it before her breakfast came. "Fighting still!—when will they stop? That rascally old imbecile, Pius!—fifteen missionaries eaten up by the Chinese!—yes, omelette this morning, that's right; thank you."

And yet, withal, there was such an unmistakable womanliness about her. "Ida, child, you are not getting half brown enough. What shall we do to you? Mrs. Manly, I'm almost afraid the sea isn't quite the thing for her," as the light-haired girl walked slowly away; "I wonder if the mountains wouldn't have been better."

One day a tall, dark, rather grave-looking gentleman appeared with this lady at dinner. He talked little, but freely and pleasantly when he did talk, and less like a learned man than like a wise man, Helen thought. The awkwardness of the schools was upon him, and Helen set him down at once as a minister or a professor.

"I guess he's her husband," whispered Mitty. "But it's a queer match."

But whatever his relation to the lady, he made a very short visit—going off on the evening boat, and Helen had doubts of Mitty's theory, when, at parting, the cheery little lady shook his hand heartily, thanked him for coming down, and said that "Sister would be very much gratified when she heard of his promise."

A day or two after this little episode came the first rain. The water was gray and rough, and had a dull roar in its voice. Helen wrote a letter to Lily, in the morning, and had designs on the padlocked book, but, changing her mind, took worsted work and went into Mitty's room.

Lunch was a dull and spiritless affair—quite beneath the attention of the waiters—and stopping in the parlor, before going up stairs, Helen found them quite deserted. It was a good time to try the piano. She shut one of the folding-doors, and played two or three pieces, in great comfort and peace of mind. But, presently, in at one of the long windows came the tall, light-haired girl, their neighbor at table. "Mother told me not to, but I couldn't help it," she said, walking straight up to Helen. "I do love it so. Please keep on. If you don't, I shall run right away again. I'd give any thing if I could play like that," sighed the girl, at the end of the gentle little Slumber Song.

Helen instinctively looked at her hands. It was difficult for her to comprehend that anybody could have fingers and not play. Then they both laughed.

"Oh, it isn't my hands; but they say I haven't any perseverance. It tires me so to practice. I never get on any; and last year mother had me give up music entirely. She said 'twas no use. Now, *please* play some more. I'll be just as good as can be, and not trouble you a bit."

She was such an appealing and such a grateful listener, that Helen hadn't it in her heart to refuse; but, as she had feared, that wasn't the end of it. The door opened, and two other girls, arm in arm, came in. They, of course, left the door open, and two more came in; and when Helen turned round, at the end of her piece, she found herself fairly surrounded and caught.

"Do keep on; it's so nice," cried half a dozen lively voices.

"I didn't know there was any body here that played so. Why, we might have a dance. You play waltzes, don't you?" said one.

"No, don't dance yet. Please play something else; something lively," said another.

Helen had a great mind to make a stand then and there, and refuse to play another note. She couldn't bear to play to promiscuous companies. She never had done it. She was in the habit of playing only when she was in the mood for it, and to those who liked ("appreciated," she was apt to say to herself, instead of liked) the kind of music she liked best. Besides, she was really timid. She never did herself justice in company.

"I know just what they want," she said to herself; "jingling, nonsensical stuff. I can't play that sort of thing. And, besides, I shall get frightened and break down. And then I don't know why I *should*. I sat down here to play for myself. I was willing enough to let this one girl listen, but I didn't propose to entertain the whole establishment."

But other things came into her mind—hardly thoughts—little scraps of things—coming, she hardly knew whence: "Seeketh not her own;" "is not puffed up;" "a work of lowly love to do;" "let every one please his neighbor!"

"Yes, I'll try. If I can think of anything," she said pleasantly; and, after fumbling the keys a little, she struck out into a brilliant "fantasia." "I don't like it, but I guess they will," she thought. She made a good many mistakes. That long running passage went wretchedly, and she had to go back and begin it again. Two very pink spots appeared on her two cheeks, and her fingers felt stiff and unnatural. But she was greeted with shouts of applause when she finished, and the Rubicon being passed, she went on then and thought of ever so many more old things which she had n't touched for months, and which she played poorly enough, she thought, but with great success, so far as her audience was concerned. Before long, there being a lull in the cries for more, she was surprised to find herself talking freely with these girls. Some of those on the outer edges of the circle had strayed off, but the fair-haired Ida and five or six others remained. It was astonishing how many things there were for them to talk about—the great number of guests here this year, the comparative delights of Siloam and of Newport, the stupidity of Saratoga, the rocks, finally the light-house.

"Have you been down there?" said Ida. "It's so nice. We've been two or three times. We're going again to-morrow. Why can't you go too? By *we* I mean these girls here," touching two who sat on the floor at her feet, "and mother and Miss Maria and me."

"Who *is* Miss Maria? if it isn't impertinent," said Helen.

"Why, Miss Maria Prescott, don't you know? You've heard of Miss Prescott's school at Oxford?" exclaimed the girls in chorus.

"Oh, Miss Maria's lovely; but Miss Prescott—I'm awfully afraid of her," said one, leaning over Ida's chair and shaking a head full of silly curls.

It seemed that nearly all of them had been, at some time or other, at Miss Prescott's school.

"You know, we're going to have some new teachers," said Ida—"a Mrs. *Somebody* from Germany and her daughter. They're coming on the next steamer. The lady is an old friend of Miss Prescott's, I believe. She's lived abroad for ever so long, and the daughter is awfully learned. Well,—that was what I was beginning to say. We're all going down to the light-house, and Miss Maria's going to take the boat from there to New York to meet these people. Mother and I are going with her, and then we shall keep on to the Catskills. They've taken a notion that the sea air isn't good for me."

"Why *can't* you go down to the light-house with us?" said one of the girls.

"I should love to, dearly, if Mitty can bring her mind to it. I'll see," said Helen.

"Oh, *do*," said Ida, who had a very loving little heart, and was so happy as never to be troubled by timid, reserved, *queer* feelings or ways, and she put her arm around Helen's neck (Helen was now on a low ottoman beside her) and gave her a little squeeze.

"These demonstrative people," thought Helen, quickly, shrinking a little. Then she lifted her honest, brown eyes and looked into Ida's soft, blue ones, and gave herself a sharp little lecture. "Warm-heartedness is a *good* thing, anywhere and everywhere, and you shan't be so unjust and hateful about it."

"I wish I could go. I certainly will if I can," she said aloud.

In half an hour the girls were seated around a table playing the newly-invented game of "Snap," which Helen had been so fortunate as to propose. It had been one of the Platoville resources.

In the course of the afternoon, the elderly ladies, in their pretty caps and soft laces, began to come in and drop into gentle groups on the sofas. A few restless gentlemen strolled in and out, joked with the old ladies, looked pleasantly on the young ones, whistled under their breaths, and looked at their watches to see if it were not time for the afternoon mail. Miss Maria, with her hands full of papers and letters (when the mail had come in), stopped for a moment to say a pleasant word.

" So you were the Pied Piper that brought out all these quiet mice," she said to Helen. " I know, at least, two young ladies who would have spent the day in deep dejection and retirement from the world if it had n't been for the music. And here they are playing this most remarkable game. Life has some pleasures left, if it does rain—eh, Nettie ?" and she pinched the cheek of the black-haired girl nearest her.

Helen went to bed that night quite decided that it was an unusually agreeable set of people at the hotel this season, and resolved to broach the subject of the light-house to Mitty the first thing in the morning.

Mitty's whole soul had been so bent on the finishing of a little dress that evening that she had n't dared to mention it yet.

But, in the morning, Mitty had one of her miserable headaches. "No, you can 't do anything for me, child," she said, lifting up a face almost as white as her pillows. "You need n't set here in this dark room all day. I shall be better by noon."

"I do n't suppose I can do a thing for her if I stay," thought Helen; "but it would be downright cruelty for me to tell her so and go off."

So she went down, with rather a grave face, to breakfast alone, and waited on the veranda for her new friends, and told them good-bye, and saw them go off in the merry little "Sunbeam."

In the afternoon, Mitty was better, and at the inevitable stitching. "I had stinted myself to get this done last night and begin the buff one to-day," she said, "but I felt so bad last night that I had to give it up, and I hate to get behindhand. No, child, 't won't hurt me. I feel better to be doing something."

Helen sat at the other window, her worsted-work in her lap, her eyes on the water. She had been trying to be good all day, and was rather tired of it, it must be confessed. Presently there was a sound of horses' feet on the gravel in front of the house, and a gay party of riders, three gentlemen and three ladies, started out over the neck and along the beach.

"Oh, Mitty, why haven't I thought of it before? I might ride every day. They look like capital horses. I'll have one to-morrow."

"You wouldn't think of horse-back riding here; not alone, certain," said Mitty, gently.

"Why not?"

"I don't think 'twould be hardly safe," was the mild answer.

"Why, I'm a first-rate rider, and I'm not a bit afraid."

"May be you ain't, but that don't make that 'twould be safe for you to go off alone."

"Well, Mitty, I'll give up on that point. I'll have a man go with me."

"Well," said Mitty, with a little spirit—she was tired, too, poor soul—"you can do as you please, I suppose. I don't think Mr. Saxton would like it; but you're of age. You can go if you want to."

"Now, Mitty," said Helen, in an aggrieved tone, "as if that would make any difference. And I'm not of age either. By my mother's will, I'm not of age till I am twenty-one. And you *know*, Mitty, I wouldn't do anything to displease my guardian."

"I think it would displease him," said Mitty, mild again.

"Why? He's a reasonable man."

"Yes, and he's a careful man, too, and I know he wouldn't think it safe or proper for *any young lady* to go off riding on strange horses, without somebody to advise her that knows more than you or I do, let alone you. You know you ain't as strong as some folks, child."

Helen sighed. Mitty spoke with her usual good sense. If she had only been unreasonable it would have been a comfort.

"I'd write and ask him anyway," suggested Mitty.

Helen wrote that very afternoon, and put the case pretty strongly she afterward suspected. The answer came the next day.

"About the riding, if you can wait till Saturday, we will have that matter settled. I am going down to spend the Sabbath, and would like to choose your horse myself."

How could Helen know?—she didn't, and doesn't to this day—of another letter that was sent from Mr. Saxton's office that same afternoon:

"My Dear Sir,—It will be impossible for me to meet you as agreed Saturday P. M. I think it probable that Mr. Jones, of 101 State St. (to whom I am happy to enclose a note introducing yourself), will be interested in listening to your scheme."

Mr. Jones did listen, and was one of the millionaires of X—— before the year was out.

When the boat came in Saturday afternoon, Helen and Mitty were both on the pier. Mr. Saxton was one of the first to step off the plank, the pockets of his duster tipping over with pamphlets and papers. But for some inscrutable reason he was not inclined to proceed at once to the hotel. He kept nervously turning back when Mitty, serene and stately, led the way forward, and seemed to wish to linger near the rapidly disgorging steamer. At last, having put the two women to a wonderful deal of bewilderment and some vexation, he deliberately stated that he had left something on the boat, and asked them to wait for him on a convenient trunk standing near.

When he came back a small boy was by his side, and behind the boy—Helen's own beloved pony, Rufus.

"One is never sure of finding good horses in a place like this," said the little man, his nervousness quite departed; "and Rufus will be all the better for being ridden again. My dear, if you like, I will find a nag of some sort, and we will have a ride after dinner."

And this was the man who knew nothing about girls!

On Sunday morning there was a good sermon from a Presbyterian clergyman in the dancing-hall, and another after dinner, in ten words, from Mr. Saxton on the rocks. By the early boat Monday morning the man of business was away.

The days went delightfully now—Rufus in the morning, the rocks in the afternoon. There was nothing quite like riding to Helen. On her pony's back the freedom and grace denied to her ordinarily, were hers. She was like other people—strong, free. "Putting on her wings," she used to call it when she was a little girl. She sat her horse like a queen, was perfectly fearless, and very graceful. The big Irish boy whom Mr. Saxton had engaged to guard her in her rides, was generally seen rods behind her on his ambling nag, while she went dashing over the rocky roads or along the beach, as near as possible to the waves. Rufus seemed to love the water, too, and sometimes would step into it cautiously with his fore feet, and wait for the bounding waves, and when they broke in their faces, would snort and shake his pretty head, while his mistress, as gleeful as a child, would laugh and stroke his mane till, both tired of the sport, they would flit off again.

"Oh, my good Rufus!" Helen would say, coming back flushed and pretty from a long morning ride, and stopping to lay her cheek against her favorite's neck, and play with his mane a little before she left him; "to think that you will never know what a friend you are to me!"

Towards the end of the week Miss Maria's pleasant face was seen again at the table. The places opposite Helen and Mitty had been taken by other guests, and Helen was first aware of the bright little lady, down a long vista of faces at the other end of the table. With her were two ladies, the expected new teachers of course. They were both unmistakably just arrived from foreign parts. The elder was a little, brisk woman, with small, sharp blue eyes, set in a preternatural expanse of forehead. She had light hair once, but the little of it that remained was quite imperceptible at Helen's point of distance, and left the boundary between the frontal and parietals entirely an imaginary one. Surmounting the forehead was a triangular black head-dress fastened only in one point, and fluttering with every breeze. She wore a black dress of a peculiar, loose-waisted type, and had black mits on her small, white hands. The daughter was much taller than her mother, large-framed, with a broad, round German face, a pink complexion, and heavy coils of yellow hair. She had a "learned" stoop in her shoulders, and always appeared in a very light-blue dress.

The ministerial gentleman was also of the party. He sat next the brisk, little elderly lady, and, either he was very attentive to her, or she was very attentive to him. He walked off, too, on the sands sometimes with the younger lady in the light-blue dress, and Helen and Rufus came upon the two in the woods one day, engaged apparently in very deep discourse.

Miss Maria was, of course, too much occupied with her guests to have much to say to Helen, and, indeed, why should she have anything to say to her? Only Helen, by her great liking for the little lady, seemed to herself to have appropriated something of her, and she watched her movements with an interest of which she was sometimes quite ashamed. There was a passing word or two in the halls once or twice, and sometimes when Helen would flit past the party on the beach, Miss Maria's smiling eyes would smile more merrily, and she would hastily doff her hat in a cavalier style that was eminently bewitching. After about a week the tall gentleman disappeared, and in a few days a fourth lady was added to the party. When Helen first saw this lady, she suddenly laid down her fork and her face flushed.

"Mitty, I've seen that lady before. That is my mother's friend—the one who came to see me after I had had that fever, and we were just starting for the mountains; and my guardian was away, and she didn't stay five minutes. Don't you remember? And in the confusion her card was lost, and I never could remember her name."

"It does look as if it might be her," said Mitty, "but I disremember about those gray curls, and seems to me she wore spectacles."

"No, she didn't," said Helen, a little indignantly; "and she had those same curls, and such a kind mouth? I was so sorry I had to go away and not see more of her."

Helen's eyes were constantly attracted towards that end of the table during the long dinner. The lady looked at her, too, and both had that consciousness of mutual interest which is apt to be mutually embarrassing. But as Helen and Mitty were leaving the room, the lady rose and followed them.

"I am sure this is Miss Roberts—the child of my dear friend! I am very glad to meet you again, my dear. Let me speak to my sister, Maria, this is our dear Lucy's daughter."

Miss Maria, coming up, stood perfectly still for an instant. Then she opened her arms wide and, gathering Helen into them, kissed her fervently on each cheek.

"I *knew* it was somebody I had a right to love. I knew it all the time. And to think that I should have lived here with you all these weeks and not had more of you!"

Helen was very much ashamed of herself. She tried to say something but couldn't. She tried to look pleased, but laughed nervously at the result. Finally, she gave up trying to do anything, and let the two or three tears that would come, come, and brushed them away brightly with her little bit of a dainty cambric handkerchief, and lifted her face and kissed both the ladies with a pretty bashfulness, that would have won their hearts even had she not been Lucy Roberts' child.

" A ravelled rainbow overhead
Sets down to earth its varying thread :
Love's blue—joy's gold—and, fair between,
Hope's shifting light of emerald green ;
With, either side, in deep relief,
A crimson, Pain—a violet, Grief:
And be thou sure, what tint soe'er
The broken rays beneath may wear,
It needs them all, that, broad and white,
God's love may weave the perfect light !

CHAPTER V.

OLD Oxford hill was glorified. All night long spirits of the air had wrought in secret. Gems had fallen from heaven, and deft and quiet fingers had festooned them from branch to branch of the stately old trees. Clusters of pearls had formed in the stiff, out-spread palms of the hemlocks, and a diamond tipped every tiny uplifted spire. The few tall grasses left over and forgotten by the summer, hung their pretty heads tinkling with jewels. Along the garden paths, and close under the fences among the tangles of broken vines and flower-stalks, there were marvels of lace and diamonds. As you turned the head, delicate hues of emerald and ruby flashed from every side.

Great Gothic elm arches reared by the strength of many a patient summer, stood this morning in pure crystal, and the eye was lost among their glittering mazes. Beneath them the wide earth was floored with silver, sprinkled with diamond dust. It stretched away sparkling to the west, where Rockshire hills stood out in sunny outline, and Helvellyn, with its "far blue eye," looked calmly on.

Into all this glory, from the little depot under the hill, around the corner where the old "head-quarters" house stood, past the new blocks of red brick buildings, up, and still up, into the pure and breezy region of the old High Street, toiled the friendly form of the Oxford coach.

Helen Roberts was looking out of its windows. As she moved slowly along under the silver arches, she felt like a queen. People had come out of their houses to see the pageant. The doors were open as in summer, giving glimpses of broad, pleasant, old-fashioned halls, and smiling heads were thrust out of windows. Little girls ran about in red and blue hoods. Groups of gentlemen stood on the sidewalk, all looking up. Housekeepers, with their morning aprons on, and breakfast shawls over their heads, chatted from door-step to door-step in neighborly wise. Every body had forgotten care for a moment.

Miss Prescott's broad, roomy, white-painted house looked little, yellow and old in the midst of all the glory. But Helen came up the long path, with the light of expectation on her countenance, and, admitted by the freckly Irish girl to the green and walnut parlor, (all boarding-school parlors are green and walnut,) sat down and cast her dazzled eyes about her. It was a comfortable, well-used room, one felt rather than saw at once, but, like every thing else, placed at very much of a disadvantage by the unwonted magnificence without. The sunshine, which seemed ten-fold sunshine, fell with a blank glare on the green carpet, and the French clock on the mantel shone beneath its glass case with a peculiarly tawdry glitter. There were old-fashioned girandoles on the mantel, and their pendants, or those of them that chanced to lie in the ray of the morning sunbeams, sympathizing with the general brightness, sent faint but merry little rainbows glancing about the room. Even the stove, which stepped out from the chimney with a bold and ugly front, seemed disposed not to make too decided a resistance, but contented itself with a good-natured struggle, (where the sunshine met it,) to prove that subtle and intimate relation that, after all, exists between black and white.

The piano, across the corner of the room, was silent, but the position of the chairs near it, and the music scattered over its broad surface, told of recent use. Behind the piano a door was open into a smaller room where there were book-cases and a harp, and, pleasant to see in the prevailing dazzle, a dark-leaved ivy treading its way among the picture-cords across the wall.

Helen noticed all these things with an inward satisfaction that crept up more and more into her face. Things had come about just as she had wished ever since that first afternoon with her mother's two friends at the sea-side. They had come about, moreover, in that pleasantest of ways, the apparently perfectly natural development of circumstances. Indeed, what should she have done, if she hadn't done this—uncle and aunt still away, and her guardian having already had more than his six months' share of her? She felt this morning as if it had been ordained from her earliest days, and as if she had known it all the time and been getting ready for it, that she was to come at this particular second term of this particular winter as a "parlor-boarder" to Miss Prescott's seminary, in Oxford. It was another comfortable feature of this pleasant "coming about" of things, that it was not until this particular second term that Miss Prescott could make a place for her, and thereby that growing feeling of grateful duty to her guardian which made her glad that she could be with him a little longer, and try to put something pleasant into his monotonous days, was fully met. "The blessed little man has had the satisfaction of putting me through a course of 'William Morril,' and given me bracelets enough to make him happy for a year, and made enough of his evenings merrily miserable, by giving girls' tea-parties on my account, and now I don't doubt he's thankful to go back to his quiet bachelorhood," thought the young lady, that morning, as she looked back from the car window to catch his last bow and see him start off for the docks.

Only one thing would have made the winter programme pleasanter. She would have been glad to have Lily and Dora with her at Oxford.

"No home for us again this winter," Lily had written in October, "and I declare I think it's shabby. As I told you, father and mother have at last accomplished the object of their trip, and Marie is going to be married. Well, they did think, for a moment, of coming home, but that disagreeable creature, the bridegroom, must needs live in the Sandwich Islands, or have his business there, and he and Marie have persuaded father and mother to go out there with them and stay all winter. They promise solemnly to be home in June, and meanwhile, mother has given me *carté blanche* to have as good a time as I can here. I'm going into company with Cousin Belle, (who is twenty-three, and begins to look faded,) and shall take French and music twice a week. Dora has begun to go to school here. She pines for you. I always wondered you took to her so. She is growing wild every day, and says the queerest things. What are *you* going to do, my dear? Dig away at that everlasting German, I suppose, and very likely take up Sanscrit, and the dear knows what else. Do let a body hear."

Helen waited in the sunny parlor as long as we have kept our reader waiting, before any body appeared to welcome her. She sat by the window, looking up into the wonderful arches, and when she began to be a little impatient, beating the first strain of her new sonata with her little brown-gloved hand upon the piano, the house was very still. The usual boarding-school jingle of many pianos, and hum of many voices, was wanting. Occasionally there was an opening or shutting of a door, and once the slow rustle of a dress across the hall oil-cloth, and, after a pause, the low humming of a song, apparently in the room with the harp and the ivy. Presently there was a nearer rustle, and a tall, fair girl stood in the door. It was Ida, of that brief last summer's acquaintance. She was paler than then, and seemed slighter and fairer-haired.

Both the girls' faces took on a look of pleased surprise, and they met as old friends. "If I had only known — how long have you been here? They have all gone up the hill to see the trees. Miss Maria wouldn't let me go. She says the air is very sharp."

At that moment there was a great chattering of voices and stamping of feet, and up the long path and in at the door, came the troop of girls and teachers. Miss Maria, seeing the trunk, rushed in in her own breezy way.

"I was afraid you would come while we were gone, but I told that stupid Bridget—did n't she tell you? I wanted you to drive up the street. It was magnificent. Ida, dear — one of these days!—"

Miss Prescott, tall, and just a trifle prim, stood for a moment in the hall among her girls. A head-dress of soft, white wool fell lightly from her gray curls, her eyes were bright; the winter air had given her cheeks an unusual touch of rose-color, and her dear, demure little mouth opened and spake these words: "The young ladies will go to their rooms, and thoroughly warm and dry themselves. At the end of fifteen minutes the bell will ring and recitations will be resumed. My dear, I am most glad to see you. You have come at an extraordinary time. We will call it a good omen."

Before the little bell rang in the hall, and the six well-worn pianos had begun to jingle, the new pupil was in her room up-stairs, brushing out her pretty brown hair. Miss Maria meanwhile shook out the dresses and hung them up in Helen's half of the closet.

"Oh, no, my dear, I've nothing else to do. *I* have no classes. I'm only the house-keeper. I have n't a faculty in the world that I'm aware of, except to keep accounts and see that the dinner is ready in time, and that sort of thing. Deborah does insist on my having a Bible-class, just to keep up a proper respect, you know, and

I have a few little stupidities in the Latin grammar, but I'm no school ma'am—no, my dear—and never shall be. Shall I put the band-box on the top shelf? I wish there was more room for you. I was sorry not to give you a room by yourself, but we are so full, and Miss Haas has such a remarkable antipathy to rooming with her mother. But she is a good creature, and as comfortable a room-mate, I should think, as one could have. Between her grand piano and the professor she's out of her room a great deal, and when she is in it she writes so much that she is generally oblivious to everything."

Presently, at another tinkling of the little bell, and a sudden silence of all the pianos, Miss Haas herself walked in. Helen had made very little progress in her acquaintance with this lady last summer. She noticed now, with a new interest, the tall, stooping form, the light hair drawn back from a broad and somewhat blank countenance, and the large eyes of pale, unheavenly blue.

Miss Haas wore, as usual, a light-blue dress. Under her arm she carried two large books, and in her left hand a writing tablet, with a half-written sheet of paper on it. Between her teeth she held a pen, which she took out and held between her fingers as she kissed her future roommate.

Just before dinner, in the sunny parlor again, Helen received a kiss of recognition and welcome from the brisk, sharp-eyed little Mrs. Haas, and was formally introduced to a tall, grave gentleman, Professor Wright, by name and title, and a bewildering crowd of girls. The girls were pretty and smiling, and the professor said something in a pleasant voice about her coming at a wonderfully beautiful time. (There was a sound of dripping eaves and fallen icicles now, and the vision had faded.) Then Miss Maria, who had a way of always treating new pupils as guests, came up to show the way to the dining-room, and sitting down at the long table, Helen was conscious of a delightful welcome and at-home feeling, such as she had never had anywhere before.

"What do you think of the professor?" said Ida, at her right side. "Is n't he a poky old fellow? But he's real nice. I think he's too nice for Miss Haas. You know they're engaged. They met in Germany. He boarded with them or something. Mrs. Haas tells any number of romantic tales about it. She says they're very fond of one another."

Helen glanced at the upper end of the table. The wise man sat with a kindly look upon his face, while Miss Haas, with uplifted fork and animated tone, volubly discoursed on some deep theme.

"As I informed your guardian, my dear," said Miss Prescott, on Helen's other side, "we have been so fortunate as to prevail on Mr. Wright, lately returned from Halle and appointed professor of homiletics in our university, to give the young ladies a weekly Bible-lesson, and to sit at our table and be our chaplain for the year. He is one of our rarest men and deepest thinkers. I consider it a great privilege to have the benefit of his instruction on the Thursday evenings, and have myself joined the Bible-class as a pupil."

After dinner, by the great hall stove, some of the girls essayed acquaintance with the new pupil. The professor took a drab felt hat from the rack, threw over his shoulders a shawl of that yellow-greenish gray description, known to theological institutions, and, pursued to the very door-step by Mrs. and Miss Haas, bowed himself out of the house.

The grand piano began to groan thereupon under Miss Haas' powerful hand. Miss Prescott walked gently about the parlors rustling her fresh newspaper, and stopping to throw her hyacinths to the sun, and there was a general flitting about of girls till the bell rang for study hour.

"I don't know exactly what a parlor boarder is," said Miss Maria, coming up at that period. "My understanding of her duties is, that she shall make herself very much at home, and have as good a time as possible."

"I will take care of that young lady now," interrupted the elder sister's gentle voice. "Come into my room, my dear, and we will talk over matters and plan our campaign."

The dear, old room, with its ugly, large-figured carpet turned on the wrong side, its little white bed in the corner, its square table covered with school-books and newspapers, the stiff, black arm-chair near it, and the low, carpeted ottoman, from that day Helen's own particular place.

Miss Prescott talked placidly away, mingling a little mild gossip with the matters in hand, and things seemed to settle themselves as simply as possible. "If you wish to brush up your French, my dear, you cannot do better than avail yourself of Mrs. Haas, Tuesday and Friday afternoons. The young ladies report them as very lively and agreeable. Mrs. Haas is a perfect mistress of the language, and I think her mind better suited to it than to the German, though she is equally familiar with that.

"Perhaps Maria has told you something of this lady's history. It is a sad one to me, beginning with a romance, ending in the common tale of poverty and hard work.

"We were school-mates together in this very town many years ago. One morning, (it was near the close of the last term, I remember,) every one was startled by the announcement that Theodosia Graves had eloped with our German music teacher. It appeared that there had been an attachment between them for some time, and, failing to obtain her father's consent to the marriage, she had gone with her lover to his native land.

"Since that time I have known nothing of my old school-mate, till quite recently Professor Wright met her and her daughter in Halle, and mentioned them to me on his return. Shortly after I received a letter from Mrs. Haas stating her desire to return to this country, and mention-ing the peculiar qualifications of herself and her daughter for teaching in a school like ours. These things were confirmed very heartily by Professor Wright, and have certainly been confirmed by my experience. Mrs. Haas says little of the years that she has passed abroad, but I gather that she soon discovered her husband's inability to support her, and that she has seen some hard times. Miss Haas is very solidly educated. She is deeply read in metaphysics, and, in fact, in almost everything. She is very fluent in the languages, and has attained to great proficiency in music. As you know, she is our teacher in German; but as I find you are so far advanced, and there are already so many classes, I have bespoke for you a share of Professor Wright's attention. He reads with Miss Haas daily. They are now reading some of Lessing's criticisms on art. The professor has a fine analytic mind, and I am sure will make the study in every way delightful."

"But I shall be dreadfully afraid of him and of Miss Haas, too."

"Oh, no, my dear; I am sure you need not be. There is not a simpler or kinder man in the world, and Miss Haas is really good-hearted."

Helen had misgivings, nevertheless, and was sure the lovers would far rather read by themselves. She looked up to say something of the kind, but Miss Prescott was clearly oblivious of any rarer bliss than that of plucking up German roots in company with an "analytic mind." Her bright eyes only gleamed with the thought of the philosophic delights in store for the new pupil.

"I extremely regret that I have not been able to join the circle myself," she said, with a gentle sigh; "but other duties have been too pressing."

"And I must study something with you, Miss Prescott."

"Yes, my dear; I think you said you have not attended to Butler."

"So I have four studies," said Helen, at last, bringing to an end the business proceedings of the session, and viewing with satisfaction the pencilled "order of exercises" in her hand.

"And are not a parlor boarder after all," added Miss Maria, from her writing-table by the window.

"I am glad of it," said Helen. "I think my guardian only said that because he was a little ashamed to send such an old young lady to school."

This was only the beginning of the "times" in Miss Prescott's room. Miss Maria was always inveigling Helen in on the most engaging and ingenious little invitations; and she had not been two weeks at school before she contracted a habit of stepping across the hall after the last bell rang for a good-night talk, which was not always a short one.

Miss Prescott and Miss Maria spoke often of her mother in a familiar, natural way, which made her seem nearer than she had ever seemed before.

Helen knew her mother chiefly by the portrait that had always hung in her room at Uncle Roger's. That had bent over her little bed in her many childish illnesses; and she had looked up to it as to some kind angel with sweet eyes and a white, pure forehead. Nobody had ever told her that her eyes were just like those. Indeed, they had seldom spoken to her of her mother at all. Uncle Roger and Aunt Maria were willing enough to answer a question, but the reserved child seldom asked one. *Once*, when she had been very naughty and deceived him, her guardian had spoken to her of her mother. Helen never forgot the solemn tone of his voice, and the feeling of his hand on her head as he spoke the sacred word. The poor little man had not known of all her naughtiness, and, if he had, would have thought himself quite incapable of managing them; but this time his delicate instinct led him aright, and probably to this one little word in season, more than to anything else that came to her in her childhood, Helen owed that calmness and honesty of mind that were characteristic of her.

But now it was very sweet to hear her mother familiarly spoken of; to know of her little ways and her sayings and doings.

"And my father, Miss Prescott—nobody ever tells me anything about him," she said one day.

"I did not know him well, dear. He was a good man, and preached good sermons. It was a sudden marriage—a surprise to us all. He was older and graver much than your mother; and we had always thought of another (of Edward Saxton) as the man who would win her love. I do not know. The Lord reigns. These things, as well as those we call greater, are in His hands. Your mother seemed to fade a little, like a flower taken out of its natural climate; but she was a good wife, and your father loved her tenderly. Mr. Saxton was abroad during the first year of her marriage. When he came home, the three were the best of friends."

In Helen's own room, though she found so much to interest and amuse her that she was disposed to take an eminently cheerful view of things, there were, nevertheless, some drawbacks to perfect peace. One stumbled over Miss Haas' dictionaries everywhere, and was liable to showers of loose papers and sheets of music whenever the door was opened, and a draught thereby created. (Miss Haas, among her many theories, held the theory of ventilation, but like some other people, with some other theories, she had learned as yet only that half of the doctrine which results in general discomfort.)

On the side of the room assigned to her, Helen had tacked up her brackets, hung her little pictures, and set out a goodly array of those familiar trifles that make any square yard of tenement one's own.

The other side, from the book-shelves to the window, was a composite of volumes of metaphysics (very likely up-side down), historical charts, "studies" in crayon heads unfinished, specimen bugs and butterflies, and bits of newspaper paragraphs pinned to the wall. Under the table in the corner, there was a mysterious nondescript object covered with a brown cloth, and a pail as mysterious covered with the same.

Very early one morning, when Helen had been a few weeks at school, she was wakened by peculiar noises in the room. "Dear me," she said, turning over in bed, with an inward groan, "if that woman does n't *sculp!* What does n't she do?"

Miss Haas stood at the round table, the pail before her, and the mysterious object unveiled discovered itself to be a half-formed plaster Clyte. With her big blue eyes fixed on the model across the room, the artist pinched and twisted into existence a somewhat swollen nose. "I hope I shall not disturb you, dear. I am finishing this Clyte for the mother's birthday. Next, do you know, if you will permit, I wish to do *you.* I have never attempted a human model. You must do your hair in that low coil as you do at night. Your head and neck are quite classic so. You will be an excellent study."

It was very ungrateful, she knew, besides being very irreverent, but Helen smothered an agonizing fit of laughter under the sheets, and for the next half hour pretended to be asleep.

The learned lady was very kind to her "little room-mate," as she called Helen. She kissed her fervently night and morning, and sometimes told her long tales of Germany, of the glorious Rhein-land, where she had passed her school-days, and occasionally of excursions and adventures in later days with the "good professor."

As Miss Maria had said, Miss Haas wrote a great deal. The little writing tablet and fountain pen went with her everywhere. As she walked about the halls from one recitation room to another she jotted down her fine thoughts, and when she went on her nightly rounds to see that the girls were safe in bed, the vision of "a lady with a lamp" and a pen between her teeth, mingled with their first light dreams. The thick documents which were the result of this ceaseless scribbling, were folded, enveloped, and handed to Professor Wright every few days, with a great show of secrecy. Helen supposed them to be profound treatises on some great theme. She found afterwards that they were, on a very great theme, indeed

Notwithstanding her constant employment, Miss Haas was always ready to talk. She would lift her eyes, hold her pen aloft, and fall into discourse at any moment. She was very kind about answering questions, and was as infallible as her dictionaries. How much she did know! It was perfectly discouraging. She had an insatiate appetite for facts, and crammed herself with them constantly. But in the composition of her mind Helen sometimes ventured to think, one or two little elements such as humor, and imagination, and original thought, seemed to have been left out. She liked flowers because they were botany, and was fond of poetry because it was literature. She had a real liking for Helen, perhaps chiefly founded on respect for her as a person of good parts, and her most advanced music pupil, and was fond of drawing her out on all occasions, and developing her opinions on various themes. It was very improving, doubtless, but a little bit tiresome, dwelling on these heights all the time.

"What is your favorite poem, Lenchen?" she said to Helen, one Saturday morning, looking up from her drawing.

"'The owl and the pussy-cat,' Miss Haas," said

Helen, solemnly. She was folding ribbons at her drawer, and had been singing a little in a low voice.

"What is that? I do not know it."

"'The owl and pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat——'

said or sung the little lady, whose eyes were unusually sunny this morning, "don't you know that, Miss Haas?"

"I never heard it. Is it by Mr. Wordsworth? Say it to me, my dear."

Helen folded her hands before her like a child, and with a serious air went through the whole of the delicious nonsense, to the "runcible spoon," and "the land where the bong-tree grows."

Miss Haas, with wide-open, credulous blue eyes, looked on. Toward the last, she ran her hand through her hair in a bewildered manner. "Runcible—runcible—what is that?" she exclaimed, diving for a dictionary. "I thought I knew English well, but I never met with that word. Ah!—no!—I do not find it—I must ask the professor."

"Oh, Miss Haas, please don't. What will he think? Do forgive me—I'm a nonsensical girl —it does n't mean anything—."

Miss Haas' eyes opened wider. It took a deal of pleading and explaining, but Helen finally carried her point, and resolved, with all her strength, to be as sedate as Minerva herself henceforth.

Possibly under the inspiriting example of the writing-tablet and the fountain pen, the old padlocked book came into more frequent use than it had seen for some months. There went into it at first abstracts of the Bible-lessons, choice sentiments from Lessing carefully translated, occasionally short sentences in Professor Wright's simple, telling words; then sometimes some sweet old hymn which Miss Prescott had read in her room late at night; sometimes a few lines of a madrigal or four-part song, that they had sung (Miss Haas, Professor Wright, Miss Maria, and Helen), after tea in the parlor; sometimes "original reflections," a bit of a sigh in visible black and white, or a comical thought that there would be no fun in telling Miss Haas. It was a medley, as it had always been, and thus a mirror of the girl's life.

On one page appeared "The School-girl's

Psalm of Life," over which the foolish maiden had wasted two precious Saturday morning hours. This was designed for the poet's corner of the new newspaper the girls were starting, was to be strictly anonymous, and was concocted in obedience to the demand that it must be "something funny." Next, with a whole blank leaf turned over between them, that the two might never look in one another's faces, and with a bunch of Miss Maria's fragrant hot-bed violets pressed for a heading, came this extract from one of Miss Prescott's old authors.

"If thou wilt be well with God, and have grace to rule thy life, and come to the joy of love, this name Jesus, fasten it so fast in thy heart that it never come out of thy thought. And when thou speakest to Him, and sayest 'Jesu' through custom, it shall be in thine ear joy, and in thy mouth honey, and in thy heart melody: for thou shalt think it joy to hear the name of Jesus be named, sweetness to speak it, mirth and song to think on it.

"If thou think of Jesus continually and hold it stably, it purgeth thy sin, it kindleth thine heart, it clarifieth thy soul, it removeth anger, it doeth away slowness, it endeth in love fulfilled of charity, it chaseth the devil, it putteth out dread, it openeth heaven, it maketh contemplative men have in mind oft Jesus, and all vices and phantoms it putteth from the heart.

"If thou do after this love, thou need'st not many books. Hold love in heart and in work, and thou shalt have all that we may say or write; for the fullness of the law is charity; on that hangeth all."

These last words Helen learned by heart, and night after night said them softly to herself, before she went to sleep. A few pages further on came something more of the diary order.

"Professor Wright says he believes it is possible for men and women in this world to be harmonious, noble, beautiful. It costs some trouble. It is a great deal easier to fall back on the fact of human incompleteness, and excuse ourselves. But it is worth all the trouble it costs. And we are *called to* it, too, he said. I don't know exactly how we happened to get on to this from Lessing. I think it was something about those pure, stately, noble Greek statues.

"I wanted to hear more, but it was high time that I should take myself out of the way and give the learned lovers a little bit of time together.

It seems to me such a forlorn courtship—making love in syllogisms, and having all their tender passages flavored with some *ology*. They never have any time to themselves, except these minutes before and after the Lessing reading, and the occasions (beautiful and rare) when Mrs. Haas succeeds in dragging the professor into her sitting-room, after dinner, and then mounts the stairs with a cheerful countenance and chatters to me till he goes away.

"I do try to leave Miss Haas and walk with some of the girls in the afternoons, when we come home from chemical lectures (which, by the way, I detest). The professor is generally coming out of his house about that time, and walks down the hill with us. But, somehow, I never can escape. They always talk to me in the politest way, and I hate to show a consciousness of being a third party.

"Sometimes I am quite ashamed of myself for looking so curiously at these two people as I find myself doing. Mrs. Haas says, 'Theo is *so* well suited to the professor! They are *so* happy together!' I suppose they are. To be sure, I'm not experienced in lovers; and, besides, this isn't a pair of ordinary mortals."

Once more, after a long and somewhat dry translation: "Here I have written myself sleepy and said nothing yet. I meant to have journalized a little; to have told how I got up at half-past five, and dressed and said my prayers by star-light, while Miss Haas was asleep; and then, with a shawl over my head, went out into the crisp air for a moment, fully rewarded, for whatever sacrifice my extra virtue involved, by a sight of Venus, the morning star, just within the horns of the wan old moon. Miss Maria was going to the city by the early train, and I felt just like getting up in time to pour her coffee for her. I was spared the latter ceremony, however, as the coachman appeared simultaneously with the coffee-pot, and she ran off with only a cracker between her fingers. It has been such a pleasant, long day, and a Friday evening."

Friday evenings were among the pleasantest of Oxford institutions. On these occasions, the more arduous duties of the week being past, Miss Prescott sat in her parlor, and, in a black silk dress and a cap, with soft lavender ribbons, received her gentleman acquaintances.

The young ladies, meanwhile, were permitted to bask in the smiles of their male friends and "cousins," and the large room was generally thickly bestud with smiling groups, chatty, musical, or tender, as the case might be. Miss Maria, whose mission in life it was to smooth off the rough edges and make things easy, was always in the room with a skein of worsted for some bashful youth to help her wind, or a suggestion of music, when fearful pauses were imminent. She was assisted in the general entertaining by two or three girls, selected in turn by a private system of her own, from among the pupils.

The others came into the parlor only upon the appearance of their particular knights, and there were always some destined to sit in gay attire in their rooms, aggravating their disappointments by rushing to the hall to peer over the balustrade at every ring of the bell.

Somehow Helen, in one capacity or another, was almost always in the parlor. Her quiet girlhood had brought her very little youthful society of a congenial kind, but she took to the new state of things very kindly. She developed unknown powers of pleasing, and her ways grew free and pretty. She was never what is called a fluent talker, but more and more she said bright or pleasant things at the right times, and, above all, she was natural and herself. As that self grew sweet and sunny, her manners grew so too. From saying, "How nice Miss Roberts is when she lets herself out," or, "How charming that child *can* be," the girls and Miss Maria came to say; "I hope you'll be in the parlor to-night. I shall be dreadfully frightened if you are not;" or, "It's going to be stupid. I must get Helen down. She'll keep the ball in motion." A sense of power in any new direction is always an inspiration. Besides, girls dearly love to please, as the sparks fly upward. There is a triumph which few feminine souls do not know in looking into admiring eyes.

And in every triumph there is danger. There was quite a new light in this young girl's eyes as she went up-stairs after some of these evenings—sometimes a little too excited a color on her cheek. But there was little cause to fear real harm. There was one who was always "mindful." And Helen, as she once said afterward, had a constant cure for anything like vanity. She seldom quite forgot this, though she seldom remembered it gloomily. But how deep the bitter remedy had gone, and how thorough had been its work, nobody who saw her guessed.

By reason of her musical propensities, Helen was much in the parlor on the evenings that were not Fridays. There was almost always singing or playing after tea. Miss Haas was as ready to communicate in music as in her other sciences. She played, or, as she preferred to say, *rendered* the works of the masters with great effect. She swept the keys of the grand piano with a powerful and well-trained hand. If it would not have been flat heresy, one might have longed for a little more shading and delicacy sometimes.

She played the Pastoral Symphony with all the pedals on, and made a perfect thunder-storm of the *Sonata Pathetique.* But her power and skill were certainly magnificent. Helen did not wonder that Professor Wright so often stayed for half an hour after tea, and always called for music.

Sometimes Helen played too. In great despite to her formerly much-respected moods, and in great awe of Miss Haas, she found herself obeying Miss Prescott's gentle decrees, and doing what she could for the entertainment of this roomful of learned people who would n't talk. If they only had done that, it would have been such a comfort.

After the playing, there was generally singing. The professor had a fine bass voice, which he was fond of exercising, particularly on Mendelssohn's "four-part songs," for which he had a special liking, and which he always handed round in a grave, decisive way when he thought the proper time had come.

> "When from out the golden West,
> Distant mountain-clouds are beaming
> Alp-like in their glorious seeming,
> Oft I musing ponder
> If the vision yonder
> Be the eternal vale of rest."

they sang one evening.

"When you and Miss Haas come up to see one of my sunsets, you will know what that means," said the professor to Helen, who was playing, and turned round at the end of the piece. "I think none of you who do not look out of my study windows sometimes can quite enjoy that as I do. Once more—let us have that once more—if you are not all too tired."

"I believe he is as deep and hearty in his own singing as he is in his sermons," thought Helen, to herself.

She liked this good man more and more every day, as indeed everybody did who really came to know him. He was awkward, to be sure; tall without being stately, and with nothing that could be called striking about him. He had a brown, rugged forehead, trusty gray eyes, somewhat deep set, a nose of no particular significance, and a grave mouth, which smiled as only grave mouths can smile, with a wonderful depth of kindliness and meaning.

Notwithstanding a total want of what is generally called "presence," he was the sort of man who, on coming into any company, brings into it something that very decidedly was not there before.

Some men,—perhaps it would not be a slander to say most men, and women, too,—simply appear among others like a kind of spectres. You do not know them in the least, though you may have held converse with their shades a quarter of a century. John Wright came himself. You felt a definite sense of him, and that was a sense of strength of security and comfort when he came in, and you missed it when he went away. This was probably because he was a simple character. Things that are great are apt to be simple. All little and lowly creatures loved this man. The cat jumped up to his knee and sung herself to sleep on his coat sleeve. Little children stole up to his side and stood close by him, though very likely he would not say a word to them, but would only cast a strong arm about them and stroke their hair a little as he talked on with their elders.

All genuine people, young or old, liked him. Only those flippant, frivolous souls who like nothing heartily, thought him "awfully stiff and quiet —so quiet." They could get nothing out of him.

If a real soul spoke, were it that of a wise man, or ignorant laborer or foolish school-girl, or little child, he recognized it at once, and met it with all his own. But before falsehood—and what is frivolity but the supremest falsehood?— he was dumb.

Without an air that could suggest the name of gallantry, this man was always especially kind to women. "Perfectly invaluable about a house," Miss Maria assured Miss Haas. "I never knew the feeling of having a natural protector till now." He advised about her railroad bonds, and offered to grind the carving-knives, and made himself useful in a hundred little ways that one would have thought such a learned man would never think of.

He brought up letters from the post-office (though, owing to a common weakness of humanity, he did sometimes carry them in his pocket a day or two before delivering them), and had been known to match a skein of worsted for one of the girls.

The talkative little Mrs. Haas was insufferably tiresome to everybody else, but Professor Wright always listened to her with a grave respect. Indeed, Helen sometimes thought that he showed his affection for the daughter more by this unvarying kindness to her mother than in any other way. The secret of it was that the good man had found this woman in great trouble once, and remembered it in his knightly soul long after the volatile little lady had almost forgotten it.

This is a long chapter already, and I will keep you but a moment longer. Only have you never noticed in the spring how little flowers that have kept their royal gold and crimson all folded over and secret in their hearts through the winds of March will open to the genial May? and how, when they have pushed up through the cold and are all ready to put on their beautiful garments, May is sure to come?

Among these free, true people, the most "cultivated" she had ever known, and yet, for the most part, the simplest, the heart of the new pupil was growing and opening fast. She did not think to be reserved, and had quite forgotten that anybody ever thought her queer. Her face grew brighter every day. Her cheeks grew round, and had a pretty color in them. Her eyes seemed to grow deeper, her forehead purer. Her mouth learned a ready smile. They said it was the Oxford air. And they said true.

" Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon ;
As yet the early-rising sun
Hath not attained his noon :
Stay, stay,
Until the hastening day
Has run
But to the even-song ;
And, having prayed together, we
Will go with you along."

CHAPTER VI.

ONE day Miss Maria came into Helen's room with concern upon her open face.

"I want to talk to you about Ida," she said, for Miss Maria was one of those rare and blessed women who always go straight to the point. Helen only looked her astonishment at anything so much like consultation, drew up the rocking-chair for her visitor, and seated herself on a cricket beside her. Miss Maria reached down for her hand and, having taken it and patted it in her own funny, loving little way, was ready to talk.

"That child isn't going to get well, Helen. I feel surer of it every day, and the doctor says so, too. It is time that she should know what we think. I came to ask you if you couldn't hint it to her gently in some way."

"I? Miss Maria!"

Helen's eyes had been growing very serious, and now she covered them with her hand.

"She has been so fond of you always. I thought it might be easier for her to hear it first from you than from any one else."

"Her mother?" suggested Helen.

"Her mother is not her own mother, dear. And she is a weak, light-minded woman. She ought to know it soon, of course, but I would rather Ida should know it first, and from one of us. It will be easier."

There was a little silence.

"It seems to me perfectly impossible now," said Helen at length, in a low voice.

Miss Maria was a wise woman, so she only bent down and kissed the young girl's forehead, and there was another little silence.

"It is almost tea-time. I must go now," she said presently. "I only wanted to suggest this thing to you, dear. If you do not find an opportunity to do it within a day or two, let me know, and I will do it."

The next morning, during Helen's practice-hour, Ida lay on the sofa, as she often did of late, feebly turning over her history. She had given up most of her studies, but had begged to keep that one. As Helen looked at her in the light of her new knowledge, she wondered that she had not noticed before how very white and thin the little hands had grown; how lustrous her eyes were, and how often, in speaking, she stopped to cough. Helen loved her gentle friend that day with a feeling entirely new to her heart. Nothing so near to her had ever before spread its wings and flown away. It is the one compensation of a lonely life that few bereavements come to it; but Helen's life was growing rich, and with the riches must loss come, too? She played her sweetest melodies, and sang the songs she knew Ida loved best, and after a while, before the hour was up, came and sat down by Ida's side, and took the book out of her hands, and began to play with her long, light hair—trying to be bright, but, at the same time, with a thoughtful face.

Ida seemed thoughtful, too, and they talked of trifles in grave voices. But, at every word, further and further seemed to go Helen's power to speak that with which her heart was burdened. How could she look into the fair young face, and say that little word? Why, when the two girls' eyes were looking into each other, as the stars look into the sea; when their soft hands were clasped together, and their tones were low and familiar, why was there such a gulf between them in that one little word?

"I wonder she doesn't *see* it," thought Helen. "I wonder she doesn't feel it—I feel it so all over me. It seems to me it will be one of the greatest joys of heaven for hearts to know each other without all this machinery," and the thought came to her for the first time in her life. She had had no occasion to look at this side of heaven before.

Perhaps Ida *did* see it; perhaps for her, too, there was a little word which it was hard to say. She put her hand wearily to her head, and said how dull they both were to-day, and laughed a little, and then the bell rang, and Miss Haas and little Mary Mitchell came in for a music lesson.

It was very much the same the next morning, and the next, and when Helen went into Ida's room, as she did on both days, to return a borrowed postage-stamp and to take a sprig of the very first of the pussy-willows which the January thaw had brought out, and the professor had brought in to the German readers.

But, on the third morning, Helen, turning over her music-book, found her old "Slumber Song," and played it.

"I love that so! I wish you would play that to me when I am dying," said Ida, solemnly, from the sofa.

Helen grew a little pale. She started up, and then she hesitated. She was not used to following impulses. If she had only gone at first; but every moment it grew harder. But before Ida spoke again she was on the floor before her, the fair bright head drawn down close within her arms. Not a word was spoken, and neither of the girls cried, but when they lifted their heads both faces were very serious and very sweet.

"You can't think how hard it has been for me to say anything about it," said Ida, still nestling in Helen's neck. "I am so glad you know it. I have known perfectly well, for a long time, what the doctor thought, and all of them, but they wouldn't speak, and I couldn't. But I knew mother ought to know, and I was going to write to her to-day and ask her to come and see me. You must tell Miss Maria, please, and — I think Professor Wright knows, for he has been so kind and said such *good* things to me. There is only one thing I want, and that is to stay here, just as long as I may. Mother is so busy with the other children — I think it would be very hard for her

—and I love the dear old place so. Will you ask Miss Maria, and tell her all I can't say?"

It was very strange to Helen. She had never been a *confidante* before; she had never been a comforter; she had never felt that she could be so much a friend. She was almost afraid, and shrank a little, but Ida kissed her and clung to her so.

In a few days it was all arranged. Mrs. Manly came, and cried a great deal and talked a great deal more. Ida was very sweet, and patient, and comforting to her, but everybody was relieved when she had gone back to her younger children, and it was settled that Ida was to stay at Miss Prescott's for the present, at least till spring opened and the weather was more settled, they said. It would be a risk to take the journey in the winter, and her mother could come at any time if she were needed.

"Then she seems still so bright and well! The doctor is doing his best, and she has such good care! I hope a great deal from the warm weather yet, and there's nothing like keeping up good courage," said Mrs. Manly, putting on her bonnet before the mirror, and carefully pinning her widow's bow.

Ida did seem very bright still. She came down stairs almost every day for some weeks yet, and brought a pleasant face into the history class whenever she felt able.

With Helen's help she began a large, handsome sofa-blanket, to leave for Miss Prescott. Some of Helen's pleasantest memories are worked in with those bright wools. Ida insisted on doing something on every strip herself, and, with fingers that were fast growing white and feeble, she worked roses, pansies and daisies that would keep her memory fresh and sweet for many years.

Ida had always been a favorite, but the girls loved her better than ever now. Miss Maria said if she missed anybody, she always knew where to look. Her room was the general resort out of study hours, and, as she grew weaker, her bed was the centre of a pretty group, of which she was often the very merriest.

More and more an atmosphere of brightness and purity seemed to surround her, and, though she said very little about it, her going away seemed daily more the sweet and happy thing it really is to those who, like Ida, have given all their trusts into the safest and tenderest hands.

A Sunday or two after Mrs. Manly went away, Miss Prescott's girls in their six-corner pews in the old Oxford chapel, turned their thirty pretty heads with a pleased surprise as they saw their own professor stride up the broad aisle toward the pulpit. Miss Haas, at the organ, broke out into jubilant strains. Miss Maria looked around with satisfaction in her eyes, and Helen couldn't help being glad that Miss Prescott had been a little afraid of the threatening February sky, and had preferred to sit by Ida and read her the sermon which she herself had promised to read. The good man mounted the stairs of the high old box of a pulpit, and carefully shut and buttoned himself in. He wore his ministerial black and white, and the ordinary look of quiet seriousness on his face seemed a little deepened. Not that there was the slightest putting on of gravity, or a suggestion of anything like sanctimony in look or manner, but you felt that he had a solemn work to do, and that he came to do it in all solemnity. Helen knew the look for she had seen it before, and the hush that fell upon the large assembly when he rose and lifted up his voice in prayer, was the same in kind that was always to be felt in the school-room, as the girls sat, for a moment, with bowed heads before the Bible lesson began and their teacher prayed for them.

The hush and attention continued when, after the singing, the sermon began. There was nothing remarkable about this minister's voice. It was not a powerful one — not a very good one. It was only true and natural, and he seemed to use it simply as the best translator of his soul he had at hand. There was not a particle of oratory about him. His gestures were few and awkward. His long arms hung by his side. He failed, moreover, of that magnetism which sometimes lies in the eye, for he was quite short-sighted, and he confined himself closely to his manuscript. Every sophomore knows that is bad. The truth is, he had absolutely no good points as a speaker, except the common ones (or those which ought to be common) of manliness and earnestness. Yet the people always heard him gladly. The influence which came from him was not one which comes from any sense or appeals to any sense. It was the remoter and higher one of spirit upon spirit. It was that strong force which comes from a living soul whose life ("and that not of itself, it is the gift of God") is pure and high to other living souls whom it loves and would help up.

"I never knew before what *unction* meant," said Helen to herself. She shrank further into her corner-seat, and wrapped herself around with the holy and solemn thoughts that fell from the familiar voice. "Whatsoever hath a blemish that *shalt thou not* offer." No maimed or stunted life; no scarred and spotted character; no partial, grudging service—only the best of everything; the purest and truest living; the loftiest character; the sweetest flowers of virtue; the entire service of the heart. No poor remnant of an evil life; no scraps of time or service; no divided duties, but the youth and flower of life the whole time; the best strength and talent; the entire being—good, as God made it good. How little and low it made all her life look! how poor her richest moments! In what utter weakness she had tried to be a better girl, and thought she was getting on.

"Lord, who is sufficient for these things?" cried out the young girl's heart. And the answer came: "But with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

When the quiet, solemn words had ceased, and the congregation rose to go, there were better hearts and higher purposes in that church than came into it an hour ago. The faces wore a look that told of holy things. People did not linger in the aisles and talk. They spoke in quiet voices if at all, and walked softly. Helen wondered how Miss Haas could come down the gallery stairs talking to the chorister with her ordinary voice and look. She wondered, and then she tried to check the thought. It was a spot. She wanted to be clean and right.

Though the chapel blinds had been open, nobody had noticed till they reached the door, how it was snowing. The paths across the college-yard were already only soft, gray lines through the spreading whiteness. The air was full of the fluttering, wing-like flakes. There was a great putting up of umbrellas and tying of handkerchiefs over bonnets. Miss Haas came up to her room-mate (Miss Prescott's family always went to and from church by rooms), and just at that moment polite old General Jackson, who had nobody but himself in his carriage to-day, bowed himself up to Miss Maria, and begged to take some of the ladies home. The teachers one and all accepted, and Miss Maria beckoned for Helen to follow, but she shook her head vigorously. She had stepped back for a moment to pin up a dress for one of the girls, and was glad enough to escape, and Miss Maria, unwilling to keep the old gentleman waiting, a little anxiously drove away. Helen slipped behind the other girls and walked alone, happy to be in the pure and silent snow. But presently an umbrella came over her head, and she looked up into the face of the man on whose words she was pondering. A feeling of reverence for him and his goodness—almost an awe—stole over her, and not even her "Thank you, sir," came out of her lips. The words seemed so little and useless. Neither did the professor speak till, an unusually large and beautiful snow-flake having rested on his coat-sleeve, he called Helen's attention to it, quite in his ordinary tone and as if they had just done speaking.

"*That* is perfect and pure," said Helen, softly.

"Yes, perfect and pure," said the good man, smiling. "He loves to make things so."

Helen looked up quickly and caught his thought with grateful eyes. That was all that was said all the way home, and when they reached Miss

Prescott's door the professor bowed and walked away. He did not come at all to lunch. He never did when he preached, the girls said.

That afternoon Helen was tired with her unusual walk, and it was too snowy to go out again. She lay on her lounge with her face to the wall, and Miss Haas, when she had come back from her organ duties and sat at her table writing, thought her room-mate asleep. But her eyes were wide open, and she was saying over and over to herself, all she could remember of an old German hymn she had read somewhere long ago:

"Ah! little have I, Lord, to give,
So poor, so base, the life I live;
  But yet till soul and body part,
This one thing I will do for Thee—
The woe, the death endured for me,
  I'll cherish in my inmost heart.

"Thy cross shall be before my sight,
My hope, my joy by day and night,
  Whate'er I do, where'er I rove!
And gazing, I will gather thence
The form of spotless innocence,
  The seal of faultless truth and love.

"And I will nail me to thy cross
And learn to count all things but dross,
  Wherein the flesh doth pleasure take;
Whate'er is hateful in thine eyes,
With all the strength that in me lies,
  Will I cast from me and forsake."

Professor Wright came, as usual, at tea-time. Helen's feeling of awe did not wear off at once. She was almost astonished to see him eat and drink like an ordinary man, and she was quite astonished to hear Miss Haas unfolding to him, with her usual volubility, some theory of Kant's she had come across lately, and asking his opinion of it. The honor which this woman must feel for this good man was, to Helen, something very beautiful and very wonderful. After tea they sang, as usual, at Miss Prescott's of a Sunday evening. Every girl chose a hymn, and they finished with "Jerusalem, the golden" for Ida, who was on the sofa in the little study. Altogether, that was a white day for Helen, though she said nothing about it in the padlocked book, and went to bed very early, long before Miss Haas came up.

Not long after this Sunday Helen was practicing busily away one morning on her "Rondo Capriccioso" for the *soirée*, when the parlor door suddenly opened and Professor Wright appeared.

"I have brought something for you to see," he said, advancing to the piano, and beckoning toward the open door behind him. And in tumbled five of the raggedest, wildest little specimens of humanity that one could imagine, and closed in an irregular circle around the tall professor. Helen looked on with unfeigned amazement and much delight. She had never seen anything like it before. Any one of them in a picture would have made an artist's fortune; and they brought in on their wicked little faces, such a vigorous breeze of that boy-life of which she knew so little, that it was like being suddenly plunged into a new element.

"It's certainly such an assortment of black eyes as I never saw," she said at last, drawing a long breath.

"That will do. You may go now," said the professor, and hustled them out as unceremoniously as they had come in. But he came back himself and shut the door.

"I beg your pardon for the interruption, but this is a delegation, and delegations are important bodies you know. They came to tell you that there are five more just like them down at the old basket factory every Sunday afternoon, and to ask if you will come down there and talk to them."

Helen laughed. She understood the trick now. She had heard of the professor's new Sunday-school in the old basket factory off on the western edge of the town, in what was called the "mud-turtle" region. The girls had told her how he had spent all Thanksgiving-Day brushing down cobwebs, and cleaning and papering the dusty old place, for his school of seven the next Sunday, and how the school was growing so that now the room was hardly large enough for those who came.

"But, Professor Wright," she began, "I never—"

"I know it is too far to ask you to walk," said the professor, very impolitely interrupting her in the midst of her sentence, "but I hope in a few weeks to have an omnibus for the teachers, and, perhaps, till then you could manage it."

"Oh, yes, sir! Mr. Moore and I could manage that, but—why, I don't know anything about such children. I never had anything to do with them in my life."

"Is that all? Good-bye. I hope I haven't seriously injured the prospects of the *soirée*. If you think of any real objections to the proposition of my delegates, please let me know."

Of course, the young lady took the class. To be sure, it was with great trepidation of mind that, the next Sunday afternoon at two o'clock, she alighted from Mr. Moore's carriage into a crowd of screaming little savages, and made her way towards the old building. And the trepidation was rather increased than otherwise when the superintendent, having met her at the door and given her a seat close by, left her without a word of parley or introduction, to make the acquaintance of the ten muscular youngsters kicking their heels in expectancy before her. It was a class that had successfully defied all previous efforts at instruction, and put to rout a big but meek-voiced tutor only the Sunday before. But the wise professor was wise enough to keep this fact to himself till many a long day afterward. In happy unconsciousness then, and in a genuine interest and a kind of admiration for these remarkable little beings, their new teacher sat before them. She hadn't the slightest idea what was the proper thing to do under the circumstances. The tutor, on the contrary, had had, and had done it, with the aforesaid result.

There was not a particle of cant or shame about this young woman. If she had n't anything to say that she really meant, she was very apt to keep silence. And it was not in her to be patronizing.

Happy for her and for them, too, that the sharp-eyed little creatures watching her every movement, read some such story in her face those first three minutes. Then she was pretty, and a lady, and boys, the very roughest of them, have a natural loyalty in them towards ladies, and a wonderful keenness in distinguishing the real from the artificial in that article.

Miss Roberts has, and had, five minutes after it was all over, very little idea what she said or did that day. When she began to talk she watched her audience, and talked accordingly. Sometimes she made them laugh, but she found that like other people, they were not always happiest when they were laughing. She tried to illustrate the cardinal virtues by tales of her own making up, but the boys began to nestle. She found, as all who have tried to be teachers of the truth have found before her, that nothing went so deep as that "old, old story," so pitifully new to them, and which from its very sacredness she was almost afraid to touch upon at first. It never seemed sweeter or more wonderful to her than it did as she told it to these outcast children. Her voice dropped low and her cheeks flushed. The little fellows crowded around her. They pulled her ear-rings, they stepped on her silk dress, they put their dirty little hands all over her white muff. And this was Helen Roberts—the dainty, and particular, and reserved Helen Roberts.

As she went on the little faces grew still and eager. Oh, if she could only get near to their hearts. Her voice dropped lower and trembled, her eyes were full of love and prayer.

When the bell rang, and the buzz of teaching ceased, and the school rose to sing, "Oh, do not be discouraged," with lusty voices, the new teacher found herself very tired.

"How did you like it, dear?" said Mrs. Haas, who had begged the privilege of coming to see the dear professor's school to-day, and was hanging on his arm.

"Like it?—what, ma'am?—oh, I don't know. I have n't thought of that."

The professor handed Helen to her carriage, and shut the door with a bang. She was half way up the hill before she thought that Mrs. Haas might have come with her in the carriage. "Oh, dear, and there are all those other people, that Miss Collins, and that pale Miss Webb—they might come with me always just as well—oh, dear, shall I ever, *ever* learn? Please, Mr. Moore, turn back right away."

They met Mrs. Haas and the professor at the foot of the hill. But the sprightly little lady would not come.

"I prefer to walk, thank you, my dear. The air is pleasant, and we were talking—the professor and I—we have many pleasant things to talk of." And, all her ribbons fluttering, she turned to the grave man, with that peculiarly,winning smile which she often put on for him, and which Helen wondered if he liked. Mr. Moore turned round and the carriage went up the hill again at a gallop. The next Sunday, Miss Collins and the pale Miss Webb, rode home with Miss Roberts.

But perhaps the best part of the Sunday-school was the week-day visiting. This, too, Helen undertook with many fears. She knew almost nothing, except what she had read in books, about the abodes of poverty. Occasionally she had gone with Mitty to take a basket of flowers or a Thanksgiving dinner to some of the most respectable of Mr. Saxton's poor people, but that was all.

But her interest in these boys and their fathers and mothers, grew heartier at every visit, and more and more she found them looking pleased when she came. In the first place, they were glad to see her. It was as rare as sunshine in those bare and dreary rooms to have a little rustle of silks, a pretty nodding and floating of feathers, and something like roses in the air when the lady took out her white handkerchief.

Then, though she grieved many and many a time that she had not talked more and better to these people, this little lady was learning to share with them whatever good and sweet thoughts came to her mind, and good and sweet thoughts came there oftener, the more she wanted them and used them.

Old Betty Mulligan, Pat's grandmother, did not get down on her knees before her, and call down blessings on her head in the Virgin's name, but the morning after Miss Roberts' call, as she was watering her scarlet geranium in the one sunny corner of her window bench, the old thing was smiling and muttering to herself, "She said she sometimes thought the flowers knew who loved them—they blossomed so bright for them that is kind to them, and shure, as she said, it takes a dale of kindness to make anything blossom in this old alley."

Mrs. Mulligan, by the way, was known to be very severe on her grandson, Pat, and that young man was in the habit of carrying with him to Sunday-school and everywhere else where he went, the visible signs of her skill and powers, in the matter of maternal discipline. Perhaps the old woman had failed entirely to observe the point of her visitor's remarks, but it is certain that she spent so much time over her geranium that morning, that the youthful Patrick, skirmishing in her rear, and drinking liberal draughts from the molasses cup on the mantel shelf, escaped one whipping that week.

And it was not all giving. It never is. In one of the dreariest of these tenements, at the top of three crazy flights of stairs, Helen found a pale young woman sewing, with a perfect, happy family of babies, and dogs, and kittens and canary-birds about her. There was a large cage in the corner of the room with the door open, and actually twenty-eight of the pretty, singing creatures flying in and out. There was an old blind poodle so devoted to the interests of this happy commune that he would let the birds sit on his back and tear off his wool to make their nests of. And the cats would purr the puppies to sleep, and the kittens would play with the birds, and the babies would sit on the floor and crow at the whole of them.

"I'm sure this is worth going anywhere to see," said the young lady, in a state of great inward delight going down to her carriage, and she told Mr. Moore all about it before they reached home.

Then there was poor little Jimmy Ross, who had had a terrible fall and had been very sick, and would be very lame always. The poor little fellow could n't get used to it. He had been getting up in the world—carrying papers for a dollar a week—and had visions of an independent news-stand some of these days.

"He can't seem to be reconciled like, Miss," said the anxious-looking mother. "He just sits there in his chair all day and don't take no interest. And he's growing real cross."

"The poor little fellow! It's pretty hard work. See! I'm coming over there to see you, my little boy! I know something about this, too—perhaps not as much as you do—but I can tell you something," she said, softly, coming up to the child. And she took the little helpless creature on her lap, and the pretty floating feather drooped down over him, and the rosy atmosphere surrounded him, and she whispered a long story in his ear alone. Nobody else ever heard one just like it. Even the padlocked book had never known these secrets. Before she left him she had brought back something like the hopeful boy-look into his face, and the nice black walnut planks and set of carving-tools, that came by express from the city of X—— in a few days, did much toward keeping it there.

When she went out of that house her look was quite triumphant. "Do you suppose I'm sorry now for all those sick, weary days, and all the misery of that getting well, to find myself as I am? Don't you suppose I'm thankful and proud? Why, what could I have ever done for this poor little thing, if I hadn't been in the very same place myself?"

The young lady seemed to be a little indignant, and to be triumphantly refuting somebody or some part of somebody, that had once upon a time ventured to differ from these views.

It was just about this time that Miss Roberts' acquaintance with one Mr. Humphreys, of the law school and also of the mission Sunday-school, was at its height. This young man had dark brown hair and whiskers, handsome blue eyes, and was as graceful as a woman.

He dangled a white hand lazily with the crimson tassel of the sofa pillow, and said things that sounded original in a rich voice. He was not at all insignificant, or a dandy. I have failed in my picture if I have given that impression. He was a good scholar, and would be a successful lawyer—a rising one, the professor said. He was energetic, a very good vice-superintendent of the Sunday-school, and foremost in college enterprises. But somehow you never would have connected the thought of anything heroic with him. If Oxford on its seven hills, had suddenly fallen under a penalty to give up its noblest and most precious, nobody would have looked to George Humphreys as the first man to leap into the gulf. Helen liked him. He talked well, and was gentlemanly, and his eyes *were* very handsome. He liked Helen, as was more and more apparent. His calls became a regular weekly occurrence, and gradually lengthened, till they included the entire evening and all the other calls.

"Oh, for Friday night,
Friday at the gloamin'!
Oh, for Friday night,
Friday 's lang o' comin'!"

He said one evening, not sentimentally, but twirling the tassel, and with such a look in his eyes as even a sensible girl does not object to seeing occasionally. Other young men bowed themselves away, but he stayed on; other groups broke up, but over in their corner these two chatted and laughed, taking no note of time sometimes till the last bell rang. They talked about everything under the sun, and certainly had some capital times together. Dear Miss Prescott, who was as innocent as a baby and as harmless as doves, and who gave her practical sister a deal of trouble by her natural inability to see the flirtations that were going on before her face and eyes, until they reached alarming proportions, this dear woman suddenly awoke one evening to a sense of the two people over in the corner, and went up stairs in some anxiety.

"I am afraid I haven't done my duty to her, dear. An orphan—Lucy's child—I ought to have been more careful."

Miss Maria, who, without anybody's suspect-ing it, always saw everything that was going on in the house, was prepared for this.

"Don't you be alarmed, Deborah. I took a good look at that thing the third evening, and concluded that I'd risk it. She is younger in these things than some girls of twenty, but I'm not afraid of her. It will settle itself without any managing; and, if it doesn't—you know you always approve of my 'treatment.' A little fresh air won't hurt it, anyway. It's time that pony came up. What with Ida, and the practicing, and the chemistry lectures being over, she doesn't get out anywhere, except in the direction of the mud-turtles."

"I believe that *is* what I want this afternoon, Miss Maria," said Helen one day, after Rufus had been boarding at Mr. Moore's a week, and she had had just one little ride.

"Of course it is, and there's that lonely Jerusalem road—the mountains all about it, you know—that you've never seen. It must be beginning to have a little color in it now. The pony shall be here at two o'clock, and don't you let me see your face again till tea-time."

Helen hadn't had such a ride for ever so long. It was considered perfectly safe for her to go alone in Oxford, and there was no ambling Irish boy behind to be thought of. She said one word to Rufus and he went — out towards the mountains — on and on — a mile or two before either of them thought of stopping. Then they took it more deliberately, and she began to look at the great brown hills and the clouds lying softly against their rough cheeks. There was the faintest tinge of tender green in some of the ravines, and a distant smell of spring in the air. Helen was quite as happy as in those days at the seaside last year, but how much older she seemed to herself.

"How wonderful it is!" she thought. "How things do open! How one does get on! I wonder if it is always so! If it is, I wonder people are ever tired of living. I'm not a bit afraid. It seems to me nothing could ever quite terrify me now; I'm so sure things are for the best, but I'd really like to know what will happen next."

And then she fell into that mood, which, perhaps, all of us have had sometimes, of feeling sure that something is going to happen soon. Things have gone on so long. They must have been for some purpose. They must be working out something else. The clouds were rolling themselves up, their day's work almost done. The world was turning over. Her life was moving on, too. There would be a to-morrow, and to-morrow would be a new day.

"I wonder what it will be! I wonder what I should like best!—I mean, I wonder what would be best for me."

She dwelt on this so long that she almost expected to find some great change at home—a letter with some great news, perhaps. But what would be great news to her? Nobody could leave her a fortune. Unless it were a fortune of brothers and sisters, it would be nothing to her. Nobody could die—unless—she had never thought of that before—her guardian. As Rufus walked slowly down the long street towards Miss Prescott's, and the clouds went on rolling themselves up around the mountains, with tints of purple and gold upon them now, and the world went on turning over into the twilight, these thoughts went on in the young girl's mind. She wished it were not tea-time and she coming down the hill. She had been off alone—to "the land east of the sun"—she didn't like to come back even to Oxford. But there was the stable-boy waiting, and there was Professor Wright going in to tea, no—turning back to speak to her, and Rufus stopped before the gate.

"Oh, I don't want to take off my wings," said Helen, out of the fulness of her heart. Her eyes wandered off on to the sunset, along the hills, now blue and distant, across the misty valley, finally back to the professor, standing by her side. He was waiting very patiently. Somehow—Helen very seldom thought of herself in that way, but it seemed to her now that Professor Wright was very sorry for her—about the wings, she meant.

"Nevertheless, will you come, and may I help you," he said.

"Yes, sir, thank you. I'll come" she answered, brightly, putting out her arms towards him.

The professor lifted her down, quite cavalierly. Nobody would have thought him a particularly awkward man just then. As they went toward the house, Helen took occasion to say something lightly about the coming spring and the lengthening days. She felt now, and wished to show that, though she had lost her wings, she was not miserable. But her companion made no answer. When they reached the door, he fumbled in his pocket for his key, put it half way in, and then, deliberately turning his back to the door, looked down at Helen.

"What were you seeing with those eyes off in the sunset?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir," she began with a smile, but her face grew earnest. "Did you ever have the feeling that some great thing is coming to you—that, somehow or other, you don't know how or why, *life* is going to be changed right here and now, and the to-morrows will never be the humdrum things that the yesterdays were?"

Usually she would have been ashamed to exhibit these foolish little notions to the wise man; but to-night, somehow, perhaps that sorry look in his face had opened her heart.

"Yes, I have had that feeling," he answered, still looking gravely into her eyes.

"And did it ever come true?"

"No."

He spoke almost sharply, as she had never heard him speak before, turned quickly, pushed the key into the door and flung it open, and they went in under the glaring hall-light.

If any great thing did come to Helen that night, it came very silently. The to-morrow went on very like the yesterday. Music flourished. Miss Maria was very kind. Miss Prescott was busy, but tender. In the Lessing readings Professor Wright gave tremendously long lessons, and was not quite so interesting as he used to be. Miss Haas talked a great deal, and wrote scores of the learned treatises, as usual. On the Friday evenings Mr. Humphrey continued to call, but the calls became gradually shorter. His eyes were *not* so very handsome, after all.

Ida came down stairs less frequently, at length not at all, till the book-cases were taken out of the little study and a little white bed put in their place, where she could lie all day and have music from the girls' parlor, when she wished it. She finished the afghan for Miss Prescott, and one night put a little pearl ring on Helen's finger, which you may see there to-day.

Mrs. Manly came in March. Ida wrote for her herself, on one of her "well" days. At last there came an April evening, when she asked Helen to play the "Slumber Song." "There, that will do; thank you, dear," she said, when it was done. "Now come and kiss me. Good-night; for I am very tired."

"Say not good-night, but in some happier clime bid me good-morning," thought Helen. The words had been in her mind all day, and she whispered them to Ida softly, though, perhaps, neither of the girls thought that that was the last good-night. In the morning,—Helen tried to think of the "happier clime" and smile; but in that room it was so strange and still!

"The sweet season, that bud and bloom forth brings
With green hath clad the hills and eke the vale;
The nightingale with feathers new she sings;
The turtle to his mate hath told her tale."

CHAPTER VII.

"GOD Almighty first planted a garden, and, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures," said the good professor, one day, though he was not given to quoting Lord Bacon or anybody else.

It was the middle of the summer term now, and the German readers sometimes graduated from Lessing, and deep in Wilhelm Meister, sat in the summer-house back of the hemlocks, while Miss Maria, near by, in gardening hat and gloves, bent over her pansy-bed.

"Ah, that reminds me, professor," said Miss Haas, "I am looking for some specimens of the *acroclinium pectinatum.* Have you any in your garden?"

"Come up and see," answered the professor, in cheerful tones. "There are white lilies, too," he added, turning to the other member of his class, who, having taken in his sentiment differently, at the other end, so to speak, was wondering how anybody could be reminded of such an ugly name by such a pretty saying. "And there are my sunsets which you have never come to see yet. I shall expect you both—when? to-morrow?"

The good man was in one of his kindliest moods to-day, though, to say the truth, the kindly moods seemed to be upon him almost every day now.

The summer seemed to come very near to his heart. He actually seemed to take a personal delight in the bursting of every bud and the coloring of every flower.

Helen looked at him sometimes, as the three sat in the summer-house (they had all their lessons there now) and thought that, with all his calm gravity, he was the most simple, light-hearted person she ever saw.

There is a wonderful child-likeness and simplicity in the heart of a good man when he is happy; something quite different from what is to be found in the heart of the purest woman. The young girl, not accustomed to observing men, speculated on this sometimes. "Why is it, I wonder? Does all the man's wisdom lie in his head, all the woman's in her heart? She ponders deep things in her heart, he thinks them with his head, and gives up his heart with simple sincerity to the joys that God sends it?"

You see Helen was very far from being an "advanced thinker" on the woman question. But then she was only a foolish, honest young girl, and had known very few men, and those were good ones.

The next day it rained, but on Friday afternoon, as the old college bell was lazily turning over in its tower and tolling out five, two ladies stood at the door of Professor Wright's house on the hill.

It was a square, white house, like all the Oxford houses, standing modestly and contentedly back of its elm-trees. The professor opened the door himself, and took them in through a spacious, empty, oil-clothed hall, with stairs in the distance, to a large front room. Here there was a carpet of melancholy hue, a few plain chairs and a table, the property of the librarian's family to whom Professor Wright rented the greater part of his house, "for the present," Mrs. Haas said. To this family also belonged the baby-carriage they had seen in the yard, and the three children tumbling over each other on the grass.

"I want you to see the view from this window. It is a little different from any we shall get upstairs, and then, when you are cool and rested, we will attend to the botany." So presently, with a couple of camp-chairs strung across his arm, the host preceded them through the hall, out at the back door, and under the apple-trees into the garden.

It was a large, old-fashioned garden, and old-fashioned flowers growing in it; rows of tall hollyhocks against the side fence, purple phlox and passion flower, and more white lilies than Helen had ever seen together before. It had a neat, well-tilled look, the result of one of the wise man's mottoes: "Rest is doing something different." Where the garden ended, a fragrant, grassy field began and sloped off toward the river and the hills.

The professor, well pleased with the lively admiration of his guests, put down the camp-chairs in a shady, breezy spot. Helen took her's, but Miss Haas was interested in a rare specimen of beetle, just then disporting itself on the path.

Professor Wright provided her with various sticks and poking appliances, and stood by her for a moment, and then, stepping in among the rows of queenly lilies, broke off a richly-laden stalk, which he brought to Helen. It was like those the Madonnas carry in the old pictures. "Bear a lily in thy hand, Gates of brass shall not withstand, One touch of that magic wand," he said, and his voice grew so kind and serious that Helen took the flowers, as she would have taken a crown, and, without speaking, looked deep down into the heart of the largest and fairest of them all. The good man, standing up over her, seemed to read her thought and expressed it for her. "I think one can never look lightly on a lily, when one remembers who it was that said of them, 'Consider.'" Then, after a little quiet—"Now, will you go down the garden (I'm afraid there is n't much to see) and help in the search for the *acroclinium, et ceteras*, or will you stay here with the lilies?"

Helen preferred to stay.

"There they go, like Adam and Eve," she thought, as the black coat and the light-blue dress went down the walk. "But, oh, how nice this is here, under the trees. And what a famous, old-fashioned house. Why, it might be made charming—those four square rooms and the great hall with the recesses in it. Some people, Miss Maria, for instance, would make it lovely. But, dear me, Miss Haas will *sculp* on the front door-step, and have a row of dictionaries across the parlor floor. I wonder—I can't help wondering sometimes, and I'm going to Miss Roberts, for once, you need n't stop me—I *do* wonder that good, rare man did n't choose a different sort of woman to be his wife, somebody like Miss Maria, free and simple. He is so simple himself. But then, as Mrs. Haas says, 'Theo's intellect!' Yes, to be sure, 'Theo's intellect.' The *acroclinium pectinatum* did not prove to be a product of the professor's garden, but Miss Haas was apparently just as well satisfied with a long switch of the *diacophyllium capitalum* with which she gesticulated, and on which she descanted, as she came up the path.

They sat a little while under the apple-trees talking, or hearing Miss Haas talk. Helen noticed that the professor had given this lady no flowers. "I suppose he knows she does n't care about them," she concluded; "and his politeness is of the kind that does just the thing that is most pleasant to every one."

The study up-stairs was built of books. There were books on this side, books on that side, books at the ends coming close to the windows, and in the middle a double row of books reaching nearly to the ceiling, and forming a complete partition, so far as it extended between the two halves of the room. It looked like the library of an older and richer man than Professor Wright was supposed to be, and he presently explained, a little apologetically (for if the good man had a fault it was that pride of being poor, to which men whose fortune consists in brains are liable,) that he had availed himself of a very favorable opportunity to purchase the stock in trade of his predecessor in office.

Miss Haas was at once swallowed up in a huge old volume of Pliny. Helen, who, though not precisely of a domestic turn of mind, had, nevertheless, an eye for household arrangements, observed with satisfaction that there was a pretty dark green carpet on the floor, and further surveyed the apartment, while the professor, on hospitable thoughts intent, sought out his rarer and more interesting books to show her.

This middle wall of books, whatever might have been its first impression on the beholder, had the effect of adding to the coziness of each particular division. On the one side, before the window (and facing it,) stood a black lounge, with the greenish-gray shawl thrown over its arm. A Claude Lorraine glass hung in this window, the only object of an ornamental nature to be seen in the whole apartment, unless a small map of Palestine pinned to the door might come under that head. "But this is the living-room, evidently," thought Helen, following the host into the other compartment. Here was the study-table before the open window. Above it hung Jimmy, the mocking bird, singing with all his might, and in at the window came all the sweet airs and sounds of the summer afternoon.

"Oh, what a window! I almost think *I* could write a sermon here," and Helen looked off with wistful eyes, across the green, peaceful fields to the hills.

"I don't doubt it. Sit down here and take it all in," said the professor.

Helen hesitated. She was a national little maiden. It seemed to her that she was not the one to sit down first at that study-table. Then she felt a little awe of the place. That was where *those* words were written, and *those* thoughts thought. She glanced towards Miss

Haas, who, sitting on the end of the lounge, was visible from this point, but that lady was turning over a fresh page in her big book, and the professor was waiting, a little gravely, she thought. So she sat down in the stiff leather chair, and the tall man, bending over her, pointed out the notable peaks in the distant mountains, and then, bringing a field-glass from another room, showed where the little white villages nestled in the nearer hills. There is nothing on earth sweeter than that Oxford view. There are no hills that gather softer shadows in the long summer afternoons, there are no meadows that lie in purer sunlight, there is no river that carries more peace in its broad course. Helen looked till that sigh that sometimes comes from very comfort broke from her lips.

"Sweet fields arrayed in living green
And rivers of delight,"

she said, softly, half to herself.

"Yes, those words come to my mind often—and there's an infinite rest in them," said the quiet voice at her side.

"And we stayed there all the evening!" says the padlocked book, under date of the next day, "till the moonlight came! When the clock struck six and we spoke of going home, the professor, *that* professor informed us, pointing to the west, that the panorama did not begin to move till precisely half-past seven o'clock, and that he had told Miss Maria we should not be home to tea. That man had actually got up (over in the corner, where nobody thought of looking till the right time), the funniest, masculinest, jolliest little spread. There were strawberries, and bananas, and confectioner's crackers (no bread, and a very remarkable collection of crockery), and the librarian's wife sent up coffee, which a small girl handed around in great style. Only Miss Haas would discourse on its being bad for our constitutions, and when Jimmy sang loudest (Jimmy is a pretty, brown, merry little thing, and I gave him a strawberry), she put her fingers in her ears. The sunset—I shall never forget it, I think, and it was sweet to see the moonlight steal over those fields.

"I wrote my name on the fly-leaf (the one at the end) of Professor Wright's Greek Testament. He asked me to, and looked very serious about it, and afraid I would n't be willing to do it. He said that sometimes when people visited observatories or strange places—once in a life-time, perhaps—they left their names recorded, and he would like to keep mine."

A person interested in the progress of the arts and sciences, or a painter in search of a subject, would have gazed with pleasure on the scene presented in Helen's room on Saturday afternoon of this same week.

At the round table sat Miss Haas, her eyes gleaming with pride, her dress streaked with acids, and before her fumed, and boiled, and bubbled an immense shallow vessel full of water which was being rapidly decomposed by means of a galvanic battery. Vile odors issued from the seething mass, but the presiding vestal was happily unconscious of them. This battery was the work of her own hands, and this was her first experiment. Since the chemical lectures on the hill had been given up, Miss Haas had devoted herself to the science, probably to the great edification of her large class of younger pupils, but much to the discomfort of her roommate, who, in the multitude of bottles, and retorts, and loathsome messes set away to fume in secret or "precipitate" at leisure, was almost afraid to water her ivy or to clean her teeth, lest she should be making use of some powerful acid or deadly poison. The battery and the experiment, however, were not the whole of the picture.

Opposite Miss Haas sat little Mary Mitchell, taking a drawing lesson. Her yellow braids hung dejectedly down her shoulders, and her poor little nose was screwed into a most unclassic shape, by reason of the odors aforesaid, but she worked away bravely.

"A little more shading there, my dear. Ah! you have finished the chimney. *This* is the way to do the roof, child," and the woman of a thousand and one accomplishments reached across the table and gave two or three decided strokes in the deficient quarter. Nor was this all. On Miss Haas' knee lay a volume of Italian poems which she had drawn to-day from the library, and, occupying the little remaining space on the table, was an open lexicon. And that all her varied powers might have still more play, this woman of women held in her respective hands a little block of holly-wood, and a penknife (she was learning wood-carving), and gave an occasional touch to the somewhat remarkable little animal that was destined to form the handle to a paper-cutter.

Helen, at as great a distance as possible from the odors, in the rocking-chair, by the window, was in a most unusual state of hilarity, consequent partly on the performances at the round-table, and partly on the volume of "Pickwick" in her hand.

"Is it so very amusing, my dear? I never heard you laugh so."

This was when, at one fearful splutter and gasp of the expiring liquid, Miss Haas laid down her knife, shut her book, and rose with a determined countenance to face the battery.

"Yes'm, you've no idea how funny it is," said Helen, forgiving herself for the *double entendre*, on the ground that nobody saw it but herself. "But there—I must put this up, and see about that carriage. It is almost four o'clock."

"What are you going to do, my dear?"

"I am going to call on Mrs. Mulligan, Miss Haas."

"Why do you go to-day, dear? It is so warm."

"Chiefly because I don't want to," said Helen; but this was in a very low voice to herself, as she went out of the room.

It appeared, on inquiry, that Miss Prescott was using the carriage then, but would be home at four o'clock.

Helen, therefore, with Mr. Pickwick and his friends, betook herself to the seat under the elm-tree, to wait for Miss Prescott, and to intercept the stable-boy who should come to take the carriage home. Miss Prescott, always prompt, soon appeared, and Helen took her place.

Ida's afghan lay over the seat. "Keep it," said Miss Prescott, as Helen would have handed it to her; "keep it, dear. I like to have it with you," and she laid her gentle hand for a moment over Helen's.

Mrs. Mulligan was at home, and received, this afternoon, in a large-figured red and yellow dress and a very ruffly cap. Jimmy Ross was at home, too, (poor fellow, there was all too little chance of finding him anywhere else at present,) but his face was brighter than Helen had ever seen it when he told her of the bracket he had sold last week for three dollars, and of the order for another like it he had just received.

"I've a great mind not to go anywhere else to-day," thought Helen, coming away from Jimmy's. "There's that new boy, I ought to go to see him, I suppose, but I don't feel like it. I can't talk *good* to-day. I believe I won't go. Yes, I will!"

The new boy lived in an old street, the oldest and poorest Helen had seen in Oxford. Little, low cramped houses, with bare and sometimes filthy door-yards, and sometimes none at all, huddled together, close and hot. At last she knocked at the door of the last in the line, "on the corner by the old grave-yard," as the boy had told her. As she stood at the door, a crowd of dirty, miserable children swarmed about the horse and carriage, and Helen bethought herself to take the precious afghan on her arm, before she went in.

"Come in, miss," said the feeble, anxious, wretched-looking woman who opened the door of the little upper room. "Johnny's near about. He'll be in soon, I think."

It was a very small room, and in it were a cooking-stove, a bed, a table, a lounge, and several chairs. Only one window, and that shut. The thermometer would have stood above 90°. A man lay in the bed, his head near the stove, and a heavy quilt over him. Two or three very young and sickly-looking children toddled about, and the woman feebly held another baby to her bosom. It was hard to talk "good" here. Helen thought of Mrs. Pardiggle at the brick-maker's, and refrained from any but general observations at first.

But the new boy soon came in. She had liked the open-faced, red-haired, plucky little fellow last Sabbath, and found a good deal to say to him now. She was always afterwards thankful for that quiet little talk in the corner.

While she was talking, the mother was busy about the stove, and the children played around the strange lady, looking with wonder at the shining bracelets, and the roses on her hat, and the wonderful bright thing she held loosely in her lap. After awhile, turning around, she found that they had taken the afghan away. They had carried it off to the bed, and were making a tent of it over the sick man's head.

"Is your father very sick?" asked Helen, after Johnny, by various wiles and devices, had succeeded in recovering the purloined property.

"I wish you'd come and see what you think of him, miss," said the woman.

The spirit of daintiness within her demurred —and, then, she knew so little about illness. But it touched her, to have this poor woman asking such a thing of her, and Johnny was looking on.

She took the chair they placed for her, near the bed and very near the stove.

The man had a gruff voice, and, besides, was evidently too ill to talk. Helen asked if they had called a doctor, and they pointed to a row of bottles on the table.

"Come again, Miss," said the woman, following Helen to the door. "I'm so troubled about my man that I cannot hardly speak to nobody to-day. The doctor thought belike it was the small-pox. There's a deal of it about. Old Tommy Carew died of it last night, and there's two took sick to-day just around the corner."

Helen said good-bye and shut the door. She was not of a temperament to be easily frightened. Her heart did not flutter and she did not grow pale, but she sat right down on the stairs (there was nobody near) with a serious face.

"One thing is certain, I've been pretty thoroughly exposed. If this *is* the disease, I may carry it to other people. And this afghan—it has been all over the man's bed. What must I do? I shall have to get to a doctor just as soon as possible, and have him tell me what to do. I mustn't see anybody first. I'll go right away."

She carried the afghan loosely on her arm. It was heavy, and began to drag, and just at the gate caught in something, and fell from her hands. At the same instant a quick step came along the walk, and Professor Wright was before her. He stooped and took up the afghan before she had time to speak a word.

"Oh, Professor Wright, please don't!"

The bewildered man only drew it closer, and threw it over his shoulder.

"What is the matter? Can I help you?"

She told him quickly, and begged him to go away. The smile that came over his face was his only answer, but it said a great deal. It did not put her away and resist her thoughtfulness; it was too kind for that. It did not laugh at her fears; it was too grave for that. But it said, as no words could have said, how very absurd and quite out of the question that "going away" was, and it brought such a wonderful sense of strength, and safety, and being taken care of, as Helen had never had in her life before.

"Let us come to the carriage. We can talk more easily there."

The good man did not say, as he sat down by her side and took the reins in his hand, that he was glad he happened (he would not have said happened) to be coming along the street just then, but Helen felt almost as sure of it as she did of her own relief and comfort.

"First, about the man. Is he suffering? Does he need anything at this moment?"

"I think not. He seemed to have remedies, but no comforts — and that dreadful cooking-stove. They had had Dr. ——."

"Perhaps we can get him taken to the hospital. We will see," and to Helen's great relief he chuckled to the horse, and they started off at a gentle trot. She had been very much afraid that he meant to go in.

"And now"—he said, after they had gone a little way, turning to her with something of the smile again. So she told the story.

"I thought I ought to go to a doctor and find out what to do," she said in conclusion.

"You were right."

Helen noticed now that they had already turned into Dr. Wood's street.

"I should have more doubt as to the disease, if I had not learned since I left home this afternoon, that it has broken out with some violence in this very quarter of town. Taking it for granted that this is a case of it, I do not know how much danger there is in such an exposure. I am inclined to think there is little, but I may be wrong. We can only do what we can, and wait."

"If only I could have got home without seeing you. If only you hadn't taken up that afghan, Professor Wright!" said Helen, with a return of her first anxiety.

The professor turned to her suddenly, and laid his broad hand over her two little ones, and looked into her face.

"My little child, it would be impossible for me to tell you how much rather, if this thing comes to either of us, I would have it come to me," he said slowly, and in a deep voice. "But that we cannot regulate," he added presently, in his usual manner. "That is not for us to know. Only we are always sure that, however it comes, it is right."

There is nothing like a cheerful mind to keep off disease, and there is nothing that so tends to a cheerful mind, as looking the whole truth bravely in the face. These two people drove up to the doctor's as if they were out on a pleasure drive, and sat half an hour waiting in the office, talking of everything but the errand that brought them there.

The doctor, as is the manner of doctors, said what he had to say in few words.

"No doubt about the disease. I've been there since you left. Didn't shake hands with him or touch him? That's right. Well, there's about one chance in ten that you've taken away something of it — not much more. Take off all your clothes and have them thoroughly aired, and take a thorough bath."

He held Helen's hand for a moment, and looked at her tongue. Her delicate face and figure always made people a little afraid of her.

"Umph! Seem to be in a healthy condition. Very little danger. But if you have, either of you, even a *headache* in the course of a fortnight, let me know."

They managed the getting home nicely. The professor hailed a convenient small boy, and Helen sent in by him a hasty note to Miss Maria.

Miss Maria's part of the work was the hardest, but one of her happy thoughts came to her, and in a few minutes Miss Haas received an urgent invitation to take tea at a neighbor's house, and play for some young visitors. So, when they drew up at the gate again after an hour's drive around the outskirts of the town, the small boy was waiting with another note, which read thus: "All right! Come home, dear child! I'll do as you bid, and keep away, unless you ring the bell. If you need anything, ring, and nobody else shall come."

Helen found the halls empty and the chemicals fizzing away alone in her room, and Miss Maria, true to her word, made no attempt to see her till she came down, fresh and sweet, in a white dress and lilac ribbons, to tea. Then the dear woman caught her under the stairs and kissed her fervently. The evening went pleasantly. The professor stayed long (though nobody spoke of music), and if he missed Miss Haas, her mother certainly did her best to make good the loss. Helen went to sleep as lightly as a child, and in her evening-prayer forgot to say anything about the danger she had been in, so many other things came into her heart to say. Love, friends, care—these were the things her heart had always cried for. When they came, was she not to be thankful for them? And for such friends, were there not some things she might ask?

On Monday morning the paper announced that varioloid of a malignant type, had broken out in the west district. The next day the man whom Helen had seen, died; and before the week closed the open-faced, red-haired boy lay in his little grave. The mother and the sickly babies were left. The doctors divided the district between them, and would let no one else visit the sufferers. In a fortnight the mortality was said to be decreasing.

On the hill, the two weeks passed a little slowly, but not anxiously. Helen found herself looking over her little effects, and putting them in order, but she was almost singing as she did it. She felt a little sudden pang of concern occasionally as she looked at the good professor, but his strong, manly frame, and his cheerful manner (he had never seemed more cheerful than now) quickly drove all boding thoughts away.

Nevertheless, coming up one evening, after a long, pleasant sing, she was conscious of a strong and thankful sense of relief when she remembered that it was two weeks and a day since that call in the west district.

The next morning, the professor did not come to breakfast. The librarian's little girl, whom Miss Maria met in the street, said he had a *headache*, but that he told her mother he thought he should be out by dinner time. But he did not come to dinner.

"I'm going up to see about it," said Miss Maria to herself, that afternoon. She did not say anything to Miss Prescott, for that Saturday afternoon's adventure had never been mentioned beyond the original circle, and, it might be, this would amount to nothing. "But it will do no harm to know, whatever it is, and that poor child is as pale as if she had committed a murder."

Miss Maria went, but the professor could not see her. The librarian's wife said that he had remained in his room all day, and that this afternoon a boy had come (from the west district) "to stay with him a few days," the professor said. The boy brought the messages to his door, and delivered them to the librarian's wife, and she brought them to Miss Maria.

The professor declared himself to be as cheerful as possible, and very comfortable, not at all sure that this was what they feared, but inclined to think it best to shut himself up for a few days. And he desired his very best regards to all at Miss Prescott's. The doctor had called once, and was coming again, the lady said.

Miss Maria walked home briskly, and, like the blessed little woman that she was, came right to Helen's room (Miss Haas was practicing) and told her all about it. "I thought I would take the carriage and just drive around to see the doctor," she said. "Would you like to go with me?"

The doctor was not in. It was nearly tea-time, and they drove home, Helen still a little pale, but a good deal brighter for the drive.

After tea, Miss Maria went again to the doctor's. Helen sat with Miss Prescott, listening to a gentle, gossippy account of Oxford in the old times when her father was professor, and then played a little for Miss Haas, who was missing the "dear professor" sadly, and then (Miss Maria was gone *so* long) went up stairs to try to find something to read. She was still searching (though there were Charles Lamb and Browning and "Hymns and Meditations," and the unfinished "Pickwick," and many other favorites on the table) when Miss Maria came in. She sat down by Helen's side and took off her hat. "Well, dear"—her tone was cheery, as usual, but had a firmness in it that showed she had something to tell—"the doctor says he *has* the disease, that it begins to look like a pretty serious case, but that there is no doubt, scarcely any doubt at all in the doctor's mind, that his strong constitution and general good condition will bring him through."

Miss Maria, too, believed in the whole truth, and it came to Helen with the gratefulness with which it always comes to an anxious mind. But somehow, suddenly, all the pent-up and half unconscious solicitude of these two weeks, and all the sharp regret of that moment when she had seen Professor Wright stoop and take up that blanket, seemed to come over her like a flood, and she put her hands before her face and bent her head to Miss Maria's friendly, sheltering arm. She did not cry. She was the sort of girl that seldom does cry, except at the times you don't expect her to. Perhaps everybody knows some such girl.

Miss Maria drew her close, and patted her in her cheery, loving way. "I know just how it is, dear. Without a particle of fault or responsibility, you have the feeling that, somehow or other, you have brought this on that good man. Now, you know, dear, that is very unreasonable. He would probably have walked right into it that very afternoon if he never had seen you, and, at any rate, you could n't *possibly* have helped it—you were already doing all you could to help it—and besides, dear child, it is the Lord's doing."

Helen looked up much relieved. It is often the greatest comfort in the world to hear a plain statement of what we know perfectly well. Then she put her head down again. Other thoughts had come, or the same ones back again.

"If I could only do something, Miss Maria," she said presently. "I have been thinking of that. Now, that boy, I presume, is no nurse at all, and the doctor is full of business. If we could get a good, experienced, professional nurse for him—that would be doing more good than we could do in any other way." The young girl's face was bright in a minute. "Miss Maria! You are the most comfortable woman. How glad I shall be if I may help in that way. Where can we find one?"

"I think we should have to go to the city, to some of the hospitals. Possibly one might be found in X——."

"My guardian knows all about the X—— Hospital. Perhaps he could help us."

"Perhaps so. That would be far better than going to the city with nothing but a woman's word by way of introduction. We might, at least, try that first, dear. I might go down on the midnight train," she added, after some thought.

Helen's eyes looked disappointed.

"Would you like to go, too?"

"Yes, please; very much."

"Then be a good girl, and you may."

"Are you not a little afraid, dear, that it will be too hard for Helen?—the excitement and the broken rest? Could you not go alone?" said Miss Prescott, when the plan was unfolded to her.

"Deborah," said Miss Maria, seriously, turning around from punching the last bundle into the little bag, "I have been young, and now am old, but I remember something about girls; and I do assure you that child will sleep more on the midnight train to-night than she would anywhere else."

"Very well, dear. Perhaps you are right," said Miss Prescott. She knew the whole story now, of course.

Quiet little Mr. Saxton, sipping his coffee over his morning paper, and Mitty serenely regarding him from between the tea and coffee-pots, had perhaps never been more surprised than when these two dusty, heated travelers appeared before them. But the ready, little man took in the whole case at once.

"Of course. Yes. I think I know where I can find just what you want. Mitty, please take the ladies up-stairs. As soon as you have breakfasted, and are a little rested, we will go out and see about this matter. My dear, you are looking well," as Helen lingered a moment, and pleased him by saying how natural and pleasant things looked at home.

"Quite a woman—quite a woman. Almost as old,"—the little man murmured as he walked back to the table. But he did n't take up his paper again, and he let his coffee stand till it was cold.

On the noon-train the two ladies went back, taking with them a quiet, insignificant-looking man, who was said to be the best nurse in X—— county.

Helen found a visitor in her room.

"He came last night," said Miss Haas, bending over a dictionary with her fingers in her ears.

It was Jimmy, the mocking-bird! Tied to his cage was a little folded slip of paper, with Helen's name written on it:

"I thought you would be willing to take care of Jimmy for a few days," it said. "I think it will be only for a few days—if more—for as long as you will care to keep him. I have told him to be a good boy, and to sing you his very choicest songs. You must see to it that he is good and merry."

Helen quickly put the paper in her pocket, and took the cage out of the room.

"That horrid, unnatural, stolid woman! I never heard of anybody that didn't like a mocking-bird—did you, Jimmy? Never—never in my life! And you didn't come for her either, did you, Jimmy? You are all—every bit for me. And you are to be good and merry. Good and merry? What must I be then? I won't be naughty. I will try not," and she bit her lips hard.

"Miss Maria, may I keep Jimmy in this little reading-room? Miss Haas—I mean—he sings rather loud, you know. And I would like to have him here."

Miss Maria, who had happened to pass the door and catch the tableau in Helen's room, kissed her heartily without a word, and hung up the cage instanter.

Jimmy undoubtedly looks back on these days at Miss Prescott's, as the most remarkable period of his existence. He was hung up high, he was set down low; he was put out in the sunshine on the piazza roof; he was taken in under the shade of the green blinds, where it must be a great deal cooler and pleasanter for him. His boiled eggs were of every possible degree of consistency, according to the varying directions of the school-girls, and he had more white sugar the first day than he had ever seen in his life before. Three times a day his new mistress brought him her apron pocket full of delicacies in the way of bugs and beetles, which he pulled to pieces and ate up in a shocking manner, right before one's eyes.

"Oh, Miss Maria! I'm afraid I've undermined his constitution with grasshoppers," cried Helen one morning, when the little fellow hung his head on one side, and stopped singing for at least a second and a half. "Alice Gray says she never gave her bird grasshoppers. They're awfully indigestible. And Jimmy has eaten at least sixteen this morning."

But he lived through all the experimenting, and seemed to thrive. He did sing his choicest songs, and he was himself, and helped others to be "good and merry."

Mrs. and Miss Haas had been very much shocked when they learned the nature of Professor Wright's illness. The elder lady was especially excited. She wept, and moaned, and prayed, and shrieked, and wrought herself up into a regular French passion, and at last Miss Maria put her to bed and gave her paregoric. Miss Haas, however, after the first shock of surprise and disgust was over, conducted herself with composure.

"That dreadful disease! I always supposed it was confined to the lower classes. But the dear professor so interests himself in the masses. Ah, well! he has the best of care. I trust he will not succumb."

From this time she appeared very much as usual, except that she made two mysterious trips on the "Oxford, X——, and Springfield railroad," and was gone all day. It was a little noticeable that neither of these ladies seemed to think of the possibility of going to their friend in his need, and neither of them made any practical suggestion for his benefit.

There were some anxious days at first. The reports of the doctor were unsatisfactory. Nothing definite could be said. There was the same dull tale every day—"a very sick man"—"a serious case." What would be next? Who should say? Then they spoke more hopefully. "If he holds out a little longer, there will be a change. He will come up." Then the change came—"out of danger." Then the long days of convalescence. These days were not forgotten by the good man's many friends. A thoughtful little gentleman in X—— remembered them. The choicest fruits and dainties came up by express from that city. All Oxford showered down flowers upon him.

One day Helen ventured to send a dish of pansies (she knew he was swallowed up in roses, perhaps nobody had thought of pansies) from herself and Jimmy. And she found them again in a sermon after many days.

At last—it was such a long four weeks to every body—at last one morning the professor came down to breakfast. He looked wonderfully tall, and, somehow, very loosely put together; and, though it was July, the greenish-gray shawl hung over his shoulders. The family was assembled in the girls' parlor, prayers just over.

There was a general, pleased rush to the door, as the good man was seen coming up the walk. Mrs. and Miss Haas fell upon him and gushed. Miss Maria gave him her hearty hand-clasp and good-morning. Miss Prescott welcomed him in her own gentle way. Helen, a little pale, and frightened in spite of herself, waited for her turn. The professor left the others and, with his very rarest smile, came and held her hand for a moment.

"Has Jimmy been a good boy?"

"Yes, sir."

And that was all that was said.

" Hark ! how the birds do sing,
And woods do ring,
All creatures have their joy, and man hath his;
Yet, if we rightly measure,
Man's joy and pleasure
Rather hereafter, than in present, is.

" Not that he may not here
Taste of the cheer,
But, as birds drink and straight lift up their head,
So must he sip and think
Of better drink
He may attain to after he is dead."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE long vacation came on apace, and brought a thorough change of scene for every body. Miss Prescott and Miss Maria went to the mountains this year. Mrs. and Miss Haas accepted a timely invitation from an old traveling acquaintance to pass the season in a Newport cottage. Professor Wright treated himself to a fishing and hunting trip in Maine and New Brunswick. Helen went home to X——, this time to Uncle Roger's.

It was pleasant to see the handsome house open again. It was pleasant to see Aunt Matilda's pleasant face, and wonderful to see her piles of pretty things. For at least a day and a half Helen's feminine soul delighted itself in trifles. The laces were so exquisite, the little hats and bonnets were so dainty. There was a camel's-hair shawl for each of the girls; a red one for Lily, a lovely white one for Helen; and there were Paris dresses in soft shaded browns and greens.

It was strange, through all this summer (at least Helen thought it so), that though she knew in her heart she cared more for the real and deep things now, though she coveted the "best gifts" more than ever in her life before, she nevertheless found more pleasure in these pretty trifles than she used to feel in them. Two years ago how she had sometimes fretted, and chafed, and cried out against the nonsense and the "flummery." But now Aunt Matilda's genuine delight in a Roman sash or a little blue bonnet, was quite contagious. Whether was it that the womanliness within her—all the womanliness, little and great—was waking up, or that a little seed long planted in her heart, which she was beginning to "keep and cultivate," had something to do with it? Who shall say? A pretty thought that she had found once in her reading somewhere, came back to her now:

"Leaves are light, and joyous, and trifling; they even dance; yet God, in his wisdom, has made them a part of the oak."

"Only, I suppose one ought to be sure what is leaves and what is in the grain," she considered. "Ah, yes—if that delight over the blue bonnet be only leaves, something little, light, outward—merely a trimming—what a rare and charming woman Aunt Matilda is!"

Helen had not philosophised a great deal on this subject. If she had, perhaps, she would have divided womankind into three classes. First, the woman who gives herself to the pretty and little things of life, till into the very texture of her heart is woven a fatal net-work of lace and gauzes. Second, the woman who, with lofty aim and pure heart, lives far above these things, and steels her soul to vanities. Third, and most beautiful of all, the woman who, with real, appreciative, hearty pleasure, wears her laces and her diamonds; yet who, with one sweep of a small white hand, will brush them all away, and hold still her best treasures, fast and safe. The trifles, then, came pleasantly, and, perhaps, not unfittingly, into the young girl's summer.

There was a pleasure of another and a better kind, in being with Lily and Dora once more. Those months in Platoville had done more to make the cousins friends than all their lives before. Lily *was* pretty. She always seemed to be growing pretty, and gave you a fresh sense of her prettiness every time you saw her, though it might be twenty times a day. Dora was grown quite out of Helen's knowledge. She was fifteen now, and very tall for that age. But she utterly refused to adopt the manners and proprieties of a young lady. She wore her dresses as short as the dressmakers would make them; she affected sailor-jackets, and hats, and bows (though they had been "out" and panniers "in" a year): she actually carried a cane, whenever she could get one into the street without being discovered by some of the family, and she sent a dagger to her mother's heart by coming home from down-town one warm morning with most of her handsome dark hair done up in a paper, "for future use," she said, while the little that remained on her head was cropped as close as Jerry Cruncher's. She had imbibed woman's rights' principles from some western maiden cousin, and distributed tracts on that subject among her elders, with great zeal and some success. She had not lost her fondness for Helen, and the three girls had many a talk and laugh together over the old Platoville times. What ages ago those times looked now!

Altogether, things went on so pleasantly that

Helen had been at least two weeks at Uncle Roger's before the old, queer, out of place feeling came upon her at all, and then it didn't stay very long.

You are not to suppose, however, dear reader, that this young girl always did and always said just the right things during these two weeks. You are not to suppose that in any thing she had "already attained." This is a story-book, and story-books cannot stop to pick up the hero every time he falls, or even to count the times he falls. It is for them to record whether he ever gets to the end or anywhere near there, and perhaps note something of the way along which he goes. After they went down to Siloam, whither the warm weather soon drove them, Helen was not so good a girl as she had been before. She resisted the special dressing for dinner, as in times past, and would not take care of her complexion. She did worse things than those. She refused to go one day with her aunt and Lily and a troop of X—— fashionables down the harbor to the light-house, just the trip she had so wished to take last summer. The only reasons for this refusal were, that she didn't like the party, that she felt just like sitting on the rocks all day, and that she had a tale she wished to tell the padlocked book. She pleased herself that day, but she did it with an uncomfortable sense that she was doing not only a queer but an ungracious and a niggardly thing. She might have given them the little of herself they would have asked for; and if they had chattered, there were the sea, and the breeze, and the sky—all her own. But this very fall was the occasion of another little progress. To make up for this lost day, Helen invited herself to the great hop of the season, at which Lily was to dance with the wealthy and distinguished John Johnson, Jr., just graduated from Harvard, and wear the new pink silk, with the elegant lace overskirt. Helen arrayed herself in a soft, gauzy dress, of very delicate lavender. She chose it, after having the two on her bed all day, instead of the new Paris green, with point-lace trimming. The last time she had worn this dress (at the soireé at the end of the term), a wise man had asked her what color she called that, and said it was like a little summer-evening cloud. But whether that fact had any thing to do with the choice to-night, she could not have told you if you had asked.

"All ready?" said Aunt Matilda, turning

around from her mirror, when Helen presented herself for inspection. "How pretty you grow, child. You have a great deal more style than you used to have. But you don't do yourself justice. You ought to dress every evening, and go to all the hops. There are so many agreeable people, and you'd find plenty who don't dance."

"Who makes your bows and ties your sashes at Oxford?" said Lily, coming up to perform the latter office. "You used to hate to make bows so. Does your room-mate do it?"

"My room-mate! Oh, girls—(Aunt Matilda had gone out, and Dora stood by, very uncomfortable, in white tarletan)—I only wish you could see," and she tried, in a few words, to set Miss Haas before their eyes.

"That's the kind of girl mother used to say you would make," said Lily. "You used to be poking over your old German dictionary all the time, and you always knew so much more than anybody else."

Lily had at times the grace of plain speaking, as well as the grace of prettiness. Helen put both hands quickly before her face.

"You're not going to cry and spoil your eyes," said Lily, in some anxiety. "Why, you know I didn't mean any thing, old girl."

"No, but I wonder—" and the sash being tied, she suddenly left the room.

"She hasn't got over all her queer ways yet," thought Lily.

But Helen soliloquised in her own room. "I do wonder if that is one of the things I'm being delivered from. Of course I'm not half so clever as Miss Haas, and never should know half so much. I don't mean that. And my mind doesn't run to beetles and galvanic batteries, either (I never took to the natural sciences), but—did I? —was I in that danger? How wonderful it is! How He does take care!"

Helen really quite enjoyed the evening, (or rather night, for they did not shut their eyes till three o'clock,) but chiefly because Dora was near her, sitting out on the piazza outside in the dark, and making the most diverting remarks on the people she could see, but who could not see her.

"I must try to do something for that child," Helen thought, "but how to begin—what to say!"

An opportunity soon offered. Dora was the kind of person to furnish her own texts. The two were sitting on the rocks one evening, and had not spoken for some minutes.

"I hate folks," said Dora, suddenly. "Don't you?"

"I know what you mean," said Helen, after looking at the girl's face, and seeing that this was not a thing to be laughed at.

"Yes, I do sometimes."

"No, you don't know what I mean, then," said the child, fiercely, "for I hate them all the time."

There was no use in telling her that she did n't mean this. She would have meant it, if one had.

"Look at them now, training up and down that veranda like a funeral procession in gay colors. There's that old pussy-catty Mrs. Brown, who patronizes mother so and 'my dears' us all. She came out yesterday after dinner and began to talk to me, and thought I was going to promenade with her, I suppose. Why, you don't know how I felt. I thought I should knock her down if she said another word, and I rushed right off as fast as I could go, without saying a word, and did n't stop till I got to the woods. I suppose she thought I had gone wild. She looked afraid of me at breakfast. What does she think of, do you suppose, that old bundle of silk and lace, when she sits there blinking at the water and the sky, what do you suppose she thinks of? where's her soul? Why, I'd a great deal rather have my Jip."

Helen mildly suggested that Mrs. Brown probably had a soul, somewhere behind her cap-ribbons, if she did n't wear it on her face.

"And there's her scapegrace of a son," continued Dora, too excited to make any concessions, "who depends on his imagination for his facts, and on his memory for his jokes (Dora had just heard that and was immensely tickled by it), and has a head about as big as a pea-nut shell. What do you suppose *he's* here for, and all that over there right before his eyes," and she pointed to the sunset.

"He who runs *may* read," thought Helen. "I saw that fellow do a nice thing once, though," she said, aloud.

"What was it?" said Dora, snapping off a daisy's head with her little stick.

"You know he's a sophomore at Oxford. I was riding there one day when I saw what I never saw before, a woman so intoxicated that she could hardly walk. She was going down a hill to her house, and there was a steep bank down to the river on one side of her. She came very near falling off there two or three times. A party of students came along just then and were looking at her, and after a few minutes, this Brown stepped out from the rest, and made this dirty, miserable creature take his arm, and walked home with her. All the way. I know it, for I walked my horse to see."

"'A fellow-feeling' and so forth," said Dora.

"That's what I thought at first, and then I thought even if it were so, and all the more because it was so, it was a real noble knightly thing. And I've never laughed at his little head and his big seal rings since."

"Well," said the child, a little staggered, "it's just as true nevertheless, in general, and especially with women. They're a set of unmeaning, unthinking creatures. They have allowed their intellects to be dwarfed, and their liberties trampled on till"—she looked at Helen and they both laughed. "Anyhow I do mean it," continued the discomfited Dora, returning to the original vein, which worked better. "Why, when I'm shut up with mother and Lily for half a day, you have no idea how I feel. I really feel as if I should suffocate if I could n't get out here to these jolly old rocks. They understand a fellow. They know enough not to torment you with senseless questions and stupid exclamations."

"Yes, I have an idea. I do know just how it feels," said Helen, and then the prettiest little sharpie came by and they had to stop to speak of that, and then they went off on a long, rambling talk about boats, and rocks, and folks. Helen wound it up as follows: "Well, my dear, that's quite a little preach, isn't it? But you know I'm *ever so much* older than you are, and I've been to school at Oxford. I have some people I want you to see, and then we'll see what you say. I can't do much for her myself," she thought; "but I can put her in the way. That's something. She shall go to Oxford if I can bring it to pass."

Helen saw very little of her guardian through all the summer. While she was at Siloam he came down once, and they had a whole long day on the rocks. He seemed a little tired and worn. It was a busy time he said. Helen had loved the little man so much more since Miss Prescott had told her that about him. She wished he could know how much she loved him for it. She looked at him long as he sat with a quiet, comprehending gaze, looking out over the water before him, and thought of his long, silent, suppressed life. She wished she had been a better child to him. He turned around once and caught her look. It seemed to make him a little nervous. She smiled and said she wished he could give himself a vacation. What a dreadful thing that business was.

"Ah, I'm getting to be old—an old man; your guardian seems to you like an old man, does n't he?" and he got up nervously and walked a few steps, and came back nervously and sat down again, and repeated the question.

"Why, no, sir," said Helen, with perhaps the most sunshiny smile she had ever given him, "why, no, you never seem old to me, Mr. Saxton. You are just as you were when I was a little girl."

The little gentleman got up again and walked away, and came back again and sat down.

"When are you coming home?" he asked suddenly. "I mean what are your plans?" *Her* plans? They had always been *his* plans before.

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure. I was going to ask you to-day," she said, playfully.

"Tell me what you wish, my child," he said simply, and waited for her answer.

Helen murmured something about Oxford and next term. She fancied he looked a little disappointed.

"More school? Very well."

"Just to finish out the year, you know, sir," she said, in a deprecating tone. "Only till Christmas. And then I shall be twenty-one." She did not say this at all exultingly. Beyond twenty-one it was a very vague prospect. She dreaded it a little.

"Yes, then you will be twenty-one. Then you shall do just as you please," he said, rising again. "It is better so. School again till Christmas, and then—"

"I wish it might always go on as it is," said Helen, with a real little pang of heart-ache.

"Supposing we don't think of it much till the time comes," said the kindly man, coming back to her side.

"Well, sir, I will try not." And then she told him about Dora, and he quite agreed with her, and helped plan the attack on Aunt Matilda, and said he would speak to Mr. Wood if she wished, and was so kind, and dear, and fatherly, that she thought of him, and blessed him in her heart all the evening after he had gone away.

She did not see him again before she went to Oxford. When he and Dora stopped a day in X——, on their way to school, Mr. Saxton was away on business.

At Oxford, there were a few changes. Some new girls, and some old ones missing, of course. There was a student as chaplain in place of Professor Wright, who had only held that office as a special favor last year. The professor, however, still had the Bible-class, and retained all his duties and privileges as friend and adviser of the whole establishment. He kept the German readers, too, but was to have them separately this year. Miss Haas was anxious to read Kant. The professor had found something else which he thought Miss Roberts would enjoy better, and he had plenty of time for her. The good man was as good as ever, and as brown and sturdy after his summer as one could wish to see him.

Just one week of the term had passed, and Saturday morning Helen sat under the elm-tree with Miss Maria and some of the new girls. Dora, near by, was teaching ring-toss to another group. The September sunshine came down through the leaves and flecked the girls' light dresses with bright spots. Oxford had never seemed more beautiful. The hills stood out blue in the clear air, the river sparkled, the fields were golden with grain. Professor Wright, with the mail, came up the street, and in at the gate. He distributed his favors to the nearer group, and then came and handed Miss Maria a letter which, he confessed, he had taken out of the office yesterday.

"I never knew a man yet who could be depended on for women's letters," said Miss Maria good-naturedly. "The best of men fail there."

"In fact, I've sometimes thought the best of men are a little worse than anybody else, Miss Maria," said Helen, a little archly. She had been one of the sufferers from the professor's infirmity, and was growing bold in measures for redress.

"Now, if I were so vain as to suppose that that remark could refer to me," said the professor, with a grave mouth and a smiling eye, "I should endeavor to clear up my character immediately by doing my duty promptly for once;"

and he drew out of another pocket a letter for Helen.

It was from Mr. Saxton.

Helen opened it as soon as the little laugh subsided. Etiquette was not strict at Oxford, and, besides, Mrs. Haas had arrived by this time, and was devoting herself to Professor Wright.

The letter ran as follows: "MY DEAR CHILD,—I do not wish to alarm you by what I am going to say. I have been ill a day or two, and there are some things I should like to say to you before the illness increases, as it, of course, may do. If you can come conveniently, I shall be very glad to see you.—Yours, EDWARD SAXTON."

Helen's face changed color quickly as she read the few words; but no one was noticing her, and she made no sound. She folded the letter and held it for a moment, and then followed Miss Maria into the house. Every body with a trouble went straight to Miss Maria.

"There is a train at eleven, dear. Now, what is there to do?" said that dear woman, having read the letter. Her sympathy was always of that kind which is easiest to take as well as most useful.

There were not many things to be done. The morning seemed long, and Helen looked at her watch many times before eleven o'clock came.

At home, Mitty met her at the door, and, speaking in a grave whisper, led the way into the library.

There she entered upon a detailed account of the beginnings and progress of Mr. Saxton's illness.

"Can I go up now?" said Helen, interrupting her.

"The doctor is there," said Mitty.

"Then I'll wait and see him;" and she submitted to a continuation of the tale.

The doctor came down soon. The kind, old man sat down by Helen, and put his arm about her.

She had known him since her babyhood, and his face always appeared to her now through a mist of childish dreams and fancies.

"He is very comfortable," the doctor said. "There will be very little suffering, and I think his mind will remain clear. You need not be afraid of talking too much. Do just as he says. Nothing seems to excite him. It is one of those cases, of which I have seen a few, in which the patient seems to take things into his own hands, and understands the disease better than any one else does. He had arranged all his papers and written directions about some special matters before he sent for me. He knows more about himself than I do."

In half an hour Helen went into the room. The door was partly open, and he was alone. The room was still and peaceful. All the calm of the man's life seemed concentrated there. The air stirred the lace curtains gently, the pleasant sounds of the distant city came in. It seemed impossible to think of anything but peace.

"Thank you for coming so soon, my dear. I am very glad to see you." Helen stooped and kissed him. "This is very pleasant. I hoped you would be able to come," he said, gently. "After you are rested, come and see me;" and he released her hand.

"I am rested, now, sir."

"And have had your tea?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then sit where I can see your face, please."

She took a large, white-covered easy-chair that stood by the bed.

"There are some things I wish to say to you. First, some business matters. Perhaps they will seem dry to you, but you have a clear mind. I think you will follow me. And it is important that you should know them." And he told her, with great particularity and carefulness, just what and in what state her property had been originally, how it had been expended and invested, and how it stood now. Then there was a little pause. "And now, my child,—*you have been very precious to me.*"

Helen seized the hand which lay extended toward her, and bent her head low over it.

"I thank God that He gave you to me. It has been the great joy of my life. I loved your mother, Helen. Why should I say I loved? *I loved her forever.* I want to tell you that you are growing up into her beautiful womanhood. May God make it a blessing, as he made her's."

Helen was looking at him now. He had gently lifted her head, and was looking into her eyes.

"I have here a little ring which was intended for your mother's hand (he drew something from under the pillow). It was not for me to place it there, but I would like her child to wear it."

He stopped, seeming to see a question in Helen's eyes, and said in a deeper tone, "It was not her fault, dear, that this was not so. It was never her fault. It was only mine—only my rashness and folly. But God has forgiven me."

He waited a little, and then, taking Helen's hand, fitted the ring to her finger.

"I do not mean it to take the place of any other that may come, my child. I *have* thought sometimes of that—if you were quite willing—quite ready—but that is all over;" and he smiled. "But let this have a place and value of its own."

Helen bent her head again and kissed the unconscious stone as it lay on her finger. It seemed impossible for her to speak. And yet she so wanted him to know. She lifted her head at last.

"I *wish* I could only say—I *wish* I had been a better girl," she whispered, and then the tears came like a flood.

"Why, my child—my child. Yes, I *know* you have loved your guardian—and God bless you evermore for what you have been to me. And now, my dear, I think you had better go," he said; and after, a 'little quiet' "Good-night. Come in and speak to me in the morning."

She went in in the morning. He seemed more feeble, but the calm and quiet filled the room as before. Helen lingered by him. Was there nothing she could do for him? Was her hand pleasant to his head? Would he like her to read?

"I thank you, dear, but I think not."

The Bible lay on the table. He had been reading himself. It was open to these words—Helen saw them as she turned away: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." And he needed no caressing. He had lived without the tender touch of loving hands. He would die without it.

So all that Sunday morning Helen sat alone. There was a little autumn chill in the air, and Mitty had made a bright wood fire in the grate. Helen held a book of sermons in her hand, but she did not read. The flash of that new ring kept coming into her eyes, and her thoughts were busy with a story of faithfulness and beautiful living, better than a sermon. About noon, the doctor came down stairs. He put his arm around Helen again. There was no one to call her "my child" any more.

Helen stayed at home two weeks. Aunt Matilda and Uncle Roger drove around that Sunday afternoon, and urged her coming to their house, but she refused. Aunty evidently felt a little hurt, and thought it "looked strange," but could not change her mind. There were many calls from Mr. Saxton's old friends that week, and she felt a wish to see them all and show them some kindliness, for her guardian's sake. Some of them had things to tell her which made her proud and glad. All of them honored and loved him. Perhaps there is nothing (on the human side) any of us need so much wish for, in death, as to be thus loved, and honored, and lamented, and yet to leave no hearts utterly broken, and no lives quite desolate, because of our going away. Besides the friends, there were lawyers coming and going, and papers to be heard and read. When Mr. Saxton's will was opened, it was found to bequeath liberal sums to a few public charities, many smaller sums to individuals, a thousand to a young man here, another to a poor woman there, and the rest of his property, without reserve, to Helen. She was a rich girl, and almost twenty-one. The house and furniture he expressed a wish that she should hold and make use of till she had good reasons for leaving it. To Mitty a liberal annuity was given, with the desire that she should keep her post as housekeeper under Miss Roberts. After all these things were settled, Helen thought it right to return to Oxford. She longed for it with all her heart, and surely she might put off these new responsibilities till after her birthday. But business pursued her. Uncle Roger, who, since her guardian's death, had taken a great interest in her concerns, wrote her to say that some of her funds were unwisely invested. The stocks were falling fast. The companies were going down; she ought to make a change.

The lawyers, in whose hands her property lay till her majority, wrote to say that they would like to consult with her in regard to the disposition of some unappropriated money, and some which it might be well to transfer, and that they thought it desirable that she should be in the city that winter, if possible.

Uncle Roger wrote again to say that he knew of a most magnificent opportunity for investment, into which he intended to put every thing he had; that she had better look out for those lawyers (they were tricky fellows, the best of them), and finally that he thought it very strange that she didn't show sufficient interest in her affairs to come home and attend to them; and that, under these circumstances, if every thing went to ruin, it would not be at all singular.

With this last letter Helen went to Miss Maria. "I am afraid I ought to go,' she said.

"Yes, my dear, I believe you ought. We must take things as fast as they come, in this world, and sometimes they *do* seem to come very fast. This is evidently the thing for you now."

"And when I have settled up every thing, and am a rich old maid, I'll come back and make myself a life-member," said Helen, trying to smile, but with a wonderful sinking in her heart.

So she went that very afternoon and said good-bye to all the boys, and Mrs. Mulligan, and Jimmy Ross, who drove a thriving business in brackets by this time, and whom she made happy, by leaving an order for an elaborate book-rack.

Last, she went to a little bit of a neat brown house, in a comfortable street. Here lived the poor woman whose husband and boy had died last summer, and her four little children with her. But, instead of the cooking-stove, and the bed, and the lounge, and the one window, there was a decent little parlor, with a strip of carpeting across the middle of the floor, and green paper shades at the windows, and back of it a bed-room and a kitchen. This woman had been found to possess a neat little trick of lace-mending and fine needlework, and had been appointed seamstress extraordinary for the Misses Prescott and Miss Roberts, and gradually for several ladies on the hill.

"Miss Maria's ingenuity and my money can do something," thought Helen, surveying the little house. "But I can't have her always. The only thing for me to do is to go to work and get an ingenuity of my own."

The next day Helen packed her books and took down her little pictures, and brackets and trifles, and by Friday morning was ready to go. The morning was rainy and dull, and though she resolved in her heart that she would not be so till she got away, at least, it was a little hard to help it. Professor Wright, who had a standing invitation to drop into breakfast, dine or sup at any time, came down under his blue umbrella this morning. It was good to see him again (she had said good-bye last night) and precious to hear him pray once more. Helen stopped a moment after prayers and stood at the window looking up the familiar street, through the rain.

"I am sorry it should rain to-day," said Miss Maria, flitting off to see the butcher's boy.

"And when you came, we put on all our diamonds. What do these things signify?" said the professor, stepping towards the window.

Helen smiled in the midst of her dismalness.

"I only know that I don't want to go. And it is perfectly useless for me to begin to thank people," she blundered out. She hadn't attempted any thanks last night. It really seemed as if she ought to.

"What is useless and unnecessary needn't be done," said the professor in a deep, kind tone. "But you will come and see us sometimes?"

"Yes, sir. Do you ever come to X——, Professor Wright?"

"I never have been there, but I think I shall go sometime."

The college-bell began to ring.

"No, not good-bye yet. I will see you at the depot."

But he took her hand, and held it for a moment before he went. And going up-stairs Helen remembered that Mrs. Haas was going to the city by the same train that would take her.

The wealthy Miss Roberts found plenty of people to welcome her home. The new minister called immediately — a young man fresh from the seminary, with bright black eyes and a broad forehead, from which his long hair was brushed back in a superior sort of way, which the young ladies thought charming.

Ladies came in in the mornings. They supposed she was not "going out" much, or seeing a great deal of company, but they felt as if they *must* come in, they thought of her so much, etc.

But Uncle Roger and the lawyers were more attentive than anybody else. The senior member of the firm with which Mr. Saxton had left his business, was away in Europe. He was a gentleman of a reverend white head, a small voice, a red face, and a gold-headed cane, for whom Helen had a respect, chiefly founded on the facts that she had seen him talking with her guardian once in his office-door, and that he sat near them in church. She would much rather have talked with him about her business than with these younger gentlemen, who seemed to know so much. They talked about stocks and bonds in a way that bewildered her. The "*Air-Line*" was *up*, the "*Under-Ground*" was *down*; the "*Bee-Line*" (Uncle Roger put in) was carrying everything before it. She remembered perfectly well all that her guardian had told her about her own property, but the greater part of her wealth had come from him, and he had said nothing of that.

"Well, Uncle Roger," she said at last one day, after having patiently heard the Bee-Line constitution expounded for the third or fourth time, "I am sure I thank you very much for your interest, but I believe I have decided not to do anything about it. I prefer to leave things just as my guardian left them, for the present, at least, even if I do lose by it. I am sure he was the most successful and the most careful of men, and things can't have changed so in this short time."

"That shows just how little you know about it, child. Money is constantly changing hands. A sharp business man is always on the look-out. I don't doubt your guardian would have made a change by this time. If you're not up to the tricks, you'll never keep your money anyway. May as well lose it all at once."

This was puzzling, but somehow she believed she was right.

"I do mean to be up to the tricks," she said. "After my birthday I'm going to be my own lawyer, and manage things myself. Indeed, I have looked in the papers a good deal already, and it seems to me that the *Under-Ground* stock is just as good as any other — higher than a great many," and she named several popular companies.

"Tricks of the trade — tricks of the trade. Bubble's always biggest just before it bursts," said the man of business, and he drew up his chair and entered into another long exposition.

"Nevertheless — I don't mean to be obstinate, Uncle Roger — but I really can't change my mind about it to-night, I must think of it a little longer," she said distinctly, before he went away.

The next morning the young lawyer called around. He was in favor of the *Air-Line*, and rather down on the *Bee-Line*. Helen repeated her determination to leave things as they were.

"Of course we shall be glad to consult your wishes, Miss Roberts, but you remember that the property is put into our hands to manage until your majority. We hold it our duty to act according to our best judgment in every respect."

This was a blow most unexpected. In all the polite consultation she had really almost forgotten that she was not a major.

"Then I'll leave it with them," she thought.

"My guardian chose them. He must have trusted them, and I will."

But that very evening, after she had gone upstairs and was reading in her room, Uncle Roger came again and the lawyer with him. They had been consulting together. New facts had been elicited in regard to the Bee-Line. The first dividends had come in. The lawyer was inclined to think, etc., etc.

"Very well," said Helen. "It seems it can make very little difference what I think about it. And, besides, of course you do know a great deal better than I do what is best," she added, a pretty, womanly graciousness coming into her voice and manner. And the gentlemen bowed and smiled themselves away.

After the lawyers were less attentive, there were some hours quite alone and desolate. The good old doctor came in during one of these times, and, after he had said good-morning and reached the door, came back into the library.

"I wish you would put on your hat, and come with me for a few minutes. I would like to show you one of my patients."

Helen made herself ready, asking no questions, and they soon stopped before a block of brick buildings in one of the business streets. They went up many stairs, and the doctor knocked at the door of a room in one of the upper stories. Helen did not notice whether it was in the third or fourth. It was not at all a mean room, though very plain and even poor. There were a few books on a table, and an easel and artist's materials in a corner. There was a very low fire in the grate, and it was a chilly autumn morning. On a bed in one corner sat a middle-aged woman — a lady by face and voice — bending over a large card-board, on which she was illuminating a Scripture text. A small, thin shawl was pinned about her shoulders. She looked cold, tired, ill — not able to do even the light work she was doing. The doctor evidently thought so, too, for he went directly to her, took the card-board out of her hand, and gently laid her back on the pillow. She smiled a pleasant, almost merry smile.

"Now, will you introduce me to your friend?"

The doctor performed the ceremony, and Helen was at home immediately. The three fell at once into an easy general conversation. Mrs. Moore talked of everything heartily, intelligently, and with a certain charm of cheerfulness that Helen had never seen equalled, even in Miss Maria.

Helen had never seen any one she liked so well on so short an acquaintance. But she was a little puzzled. What did the doctor bring her here for? This was surely not a charity patient. And yet — she looked about the bare room and at the little cheerless fire.

"How does my picture come on?" said the doctor at length, with a glance at the easel.

"Ah, doctor! you are too transparent. I am sure your office cannot hold another picture. Harry is working away at it, though. Here he comes!"

In at the door came a handsome, tall boy of fourteen or fifteen. He bowed and shook hands with the doctor, but did not speak, and his mother only smiled at him without speaking.

"This is Harry — my silent boy," she said presently, turning to Helen, and Helen thought with a proud look on her face. And then she said a few words to him in the deaf and dumb language, and he came up with his bright eyes and ready smile, and shook hands with Helen. Then he went to the easel in the corner. The doctor followed him, and had a few words with him on paper about the picture, and then it was time to go, and they left. The doctor looked in at another door before going down stairs. The room into which this opened served as a kitchen to the other apartment, by a window in the sun sat an old woman, shivering and drawing a faded shawl about her. The doctor, without a word, put a bank-note into her hand.

"The Lord bless you, doctor," said the old woman, her face brightening wonderfully, "for that handful of coals in the grate is the last that we have, and I couldn't bear to tell her. And she awondering why I don't have time to come and fix the fire! And there isn't but five cents in the purse for dinner, unless Master Harry sold a picture while he was out just now.'"

Helen quickly opened her purse and pressed another bill into the old woman's hand.

"Do tell me about her, doctor," she said, as soon as they were in the carriage.

"All I know," said the doctor, "is that she is a minister's widow, and that I have always found her just what you saw her this morning."

"I thank you for taking me there," said Helen.

" So others shall
Take patience, labor, to their heart and hand
From thy heart, and thy hand, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dewdrop with another near."

"So others shall
Take patient labor to their heart and hand
From thy heart and thy hand, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower with a brimming cup may stand,
And share its dewdrop with another near."

CHAPTER IX.

NOT many days after the "events narrated in the last chapter," Miss Roberts' glossy carriage, with the shining black horses and coachman, drew up before that same block of buildings on Water St. And a few minutes thereafter Miss Roberts herself, with a basket of flowers in her hand, stood at the door in the third or fourth story, knocking a little timidly. Nothing had been said about her coming again, and Mrs. Moore was clearly not a person one could make a charity of visiting.

Mrs. Moore would probably have been unable to say, at that moment, whether she cared to see the young lady again. But Helen's honest eyes and simple manner settled the question at once.

"May I come again? I wanted to."

"You are very good to come again. And—Oh, those flowers!—please find a seat." But Harry had already brought up a chair.

There was a better fire in the grate this time.

Otherwise, the room was the same. The cardboard and illuminating materials were again on the bed, but they had been moved aside to make a place for Harry's books. There was a history, an algebra, and, to Helen's surprise, a Latin grammar, and Sallust. The morning lessons were evidently going on, and Helen said something politely about interrupting. But Harry, who seemed to take in everything that was said through his bright eyes, bowed himself away to the table with his algebra, and was lost to everything but that in a moment.

"I have always attended to Harry's lessons myself," said Mrs. Moore, seeing Helen's interest in the books. "Of course, he is not open to ordinary schooling, and I could not send him to an institution. He has been able thus far. to keep up with boys of his own age, and, what is perhaps a little strange, he is particularly fond of language. His father thought that he had better be fitted for college, at least. But his fondness for painting is of so great practical use to us now, and, indeed, probably always will be to him, so much more useful than anything else could be, that we are giving a good deal of time to that now. Have you been well?" she added, politely, conscious of having talked a long time of her own affairs, and leaning back a little wearily on her pillow.

She looked still paler and more feeble than she had looked before, and Helen knew that that bed-covering was too thin. Peter had been told it was to be a short call, but still Helen sat by the bed till, at least, half an hour had passed.

They talked, as before, of everything,—books, places, characters, pictures. Very few personal questions were asked on either side, but Helen, in some way, discovered that Mrs. Moore had not walked for two years, and that there was no hope of her ever being well. Harry, after a while, left his book, and, with his little pocket-slate and pencil, joined in the conversation, and afterwards showed Helen his pictures. She did not consider herself a judge of such matters, but they seemed to her remarkably good. She wanted to order one for herself, but hardly felt free enough at present.

After she left them, following the doctor's example, she knocked at the door of the next room. The old servant was there again, this time bending over the stove, stirring something that looked like hominy.

"Come in, miss, I'm hearty glad to see you," she said, wiping her hands and setting out a chair.

"I've been calling on Mrs. Moore. I came to ask you if you are in need of anything to-day," said Helen, a little bashfully. She was not much accustomed to these things.

"Thank the Lord, miss, we have everything we need to-day. There's two dollars in the purse. You and the doctor was very kind, miss," she continued, fancying that the young lady looked surprised. "You was very kind, and Miss Mary (she always called Mrs. Moore Miss Mary) has sold two more of her little things, but the money *had* to go. She must have medicines and things to eat. But there's nothing now but the rent. The rent comes due to-morrow. She was talking about it to-day. She said she could n't think of another thing to do, nor nothing more to sell, but she believed the Lord would provide. She would wait. Perhaps some of them as owed her husband would have it put into their hearts to pay."

"The Lord *will* provide," said Helen, solemnly. It was a very solemn thing to her, that *she* was beginning to be used; that He was letting *her* do something—just a little even.

"I shall see you again soon," she said to the old woman, and left.

"Where next, miss?" said Peter from the box, when she had shut herself into the carriage and leaned back, expecting him to start.

"Oh, I don't know, Peter—anywhere—drive around a little—out on the harbor road—till I think."

She did think, looking steadily out of the window.

"Now, Peter," at length came the clear, decided voice—"now down to Mr. Mowry's office. You know where that is—on Water Street, I believe."

Peter, deeply meditating on that characteristic of the female human mind, which resulted, in this instance, in his driving back over ground he had just traversed to a spot within a stone's throw of the place he had just left, turned the black horses and started for the city.

Mr. Mowry was the gentleman who owned Mowry's building, at least Helen judged that to be the case from the circumstance of his name being attached to the building, and she found herself correct. Before she left the gentleman's office she had paid the rent of those two rooms in the third story for three months in advance, and tucked the receipt carefully into the inner compartment of her portmonnaie. Then she went home and thought some more.

She did not like to force this little bit of a kind thing on Mrs. Moore's attention at once.

She would rather she should not know of it at all. And yet she could not quite bring her mind to plotting even thus benevolently with the old servant about her mistress's affairs. It suited her better to be honest. Besides, Mrs. Moore had a right to know, and if she did not know would be likely to be troubled and anxious, or, at the best, suspect. It occurred to her to tell the doctor, and let Mrs. Moore think herself indebted to him. But she thought she would rather tell Mrs. Moore than the doctor. She resolved on a compromise. She would do nothing about it just now. The bill would not be sent in, and there would be no immediate distress. She would stay away from Mowry's building for a few days.

Meantime, there was plenty to keep her busy. She was not yet fairly settled as mistress of her beautiful house. It was desirable that she should look over everything with Mitty, and learn what her possessions really were. She felt a wish to open every individual book in the library, and some of them she found so full of pencil-marks by her guardian's hand that she was tempted to linger long over their pages. Mr. Saxton's papers (those which the lawyers had left) it was not easy for her to look at yet. She found two or three packets of old letters tied together, and directed to herself, and some directed to other persons. These latter she sent away at once. Then she locked the secret drawer and put the key on her watch-chain. Into the other parts of the secretary she removed her own dainty, little, lady-like writing materials. She had a feeling that her guardian would like to have her use it.

The family pictures, old-fashioned portraits of ladies in low-necked dresses, with stiff roses and mammoth fans in their hands, and of gray-wigged gentlemen in ruffled shirts, were brought over from Uncle Roger's and hung in the spacious hall. Her mother's portrait was placed in her own room, where she could see it from her bed as in her childish days. She had never loved it so well as now.

Two or three days having passed thus busily, Helen dispatched a note one morning to Mrs.

Moore, and at five o'clock on the evening of that morning, Harry kissed his mother good-bye and started in the early autumn twilight for the avenue.

Helen sat by the library table in the soft light of the porcelain shade, and with the glow of the anthracite fire behind her, when the boy brought his bright eyes and handsome face into the picture. A pretty, hospitable grace came upon the little lady as she rose to welcome her guest, and drew him toward the fire, and took his little slate and pencil from him, that he should not write till he had warmed his hands. He sat down by her side and the two kept up a lively conversation in that quietest of ways. It might have seemed a pitiful way, had it not been for the great intelligence of the boy's face, and the ease and cheerfulness of his whole manner. But it was far too slow.

"I must learn your alphabet," wrote Helen on the slate. "You must teach me after tea."

Mitty, from behind the tea-pots, looked with blank amaze on the young visitor. She shrieked and battered on the tray to see if he would take a cup of tea, and gesticulated in such a remarkable manner about the cream and sugar, that the polite little fellow had all he could do to keep from laughing. After tea, when Miss Roberts had ordered " all them chanticleers" lighted in the large parlors, and the strange boy was taken in to see the pictures, she followed in her black silk dress and stateliest air to watch for further developments.

Mr. Saxton was a man of taste and culture, and the pictures he had purchased from time to time were good and rare ones. Harry was delighted. His bright eyes sometimes danced, and sometimes grew dark and serious. He came back to Helen, who sat in a low chair, watching him as he made the tour of the room, and pointed out those he liked best with a glowing face.

" You love your art very much?" asked Helen, on the slate. His face gave the answer.

" It is my life," he said. " The pictures talk to me. They say so much to me."

" Do you love them better than your books?"

" They come nearer to me, yes. Yet I like the others very much. I like the Latin. The meaning *fits in* so well."

" You intend to be an artist?"

His face was a little grave as he wrote the answer, " I hope so. I mean to be all I can be."

"Have you any plans?"

He shook his head. "I must wait and see." That seemed to be the family motto.

"Any friends?"

He looked puzzled. "My mother and the doctor—"

Helen pointed to herself inquiringly. He smiled and bowed a pleasant assent.

Harry reported his mother not quite so well. It was time for another call Helen thought, and she felt ready for it after that pleasant evening. It was one of the pleasantest evenings she could remember, excepting, of course, some at Oxford.

Before she set out the next morning, she had a little colloquy with herself in her bed-room. "I'll take that crimson coverlet." "Why do you take that? There are plenty of nice bed-quilts in the closets, or blankets. Blankets are very useful things." "Because, it's a sort of a luxury, a dainty. It will be easier for her to take such a thing than it would be to take a great blanket, lugged in as a charity. Besides, it is lighter and pleasanter on one's bed." "Perhaps it won't be warm enough." "Yes, it will. You know down is warm enough." "Now, Helen Roberts, you stop *that*." "But this a color and style you particularly fancy. You could buy her a down coverlet if you wanted to. You are rich enough, and there are plenty of them at Haberdasher's."

"No, I'll have *this* one. I'll have it because you like it, Helen Roberts. It will do you good to miss it. And I won't get you another for a month, and not then, unless you behave yourself. I heard a good man say once that we have no right to condemn the penances and mortifications of the Roman Catholics, unless we have something better to substitute for them, that it takes a long time to reach the point where we can live sweet and saintly lives spontaneously—without some help of this kind—and that if we would lift up our lives and make them Christ-like, it is almost indispensable to deny ourselves, on principle, systematically, and for the sake of denying ourselves. I remember so well when he said that. We were in the summer-house, and Miss Haas had gone in, and I was feeling naughty about something, and said something about punishing myself, and he asked if that did any good, and—there, my dear, I guess you had better stop *that*, too. Come along with your crimson coverlet. Here's Peter waiting."

The crimson coverlet, and Miss Roberts behind it, were very soon in that third story room of Mowry's building. "I brought you this," said Helen, blushing brightly. "It is light and pleasant sometimes when one does n't feel strong. And this, too—may I?" she said, feeling suddenly that it might as well all be over with at once, and drawing out the receipt. "And if you knew how much more of a favor it is to me than it can possibly be to you, you would n't—please—I know you would n't thank me," she added, hurriedly, looking very much as if she had a great mind to run right away. A strange, bright, loving look came to Mrs. Moore's face. Perhaps no one had ever seen Helen when she was worthier to be loved.

"No, I won't thank you, dear, since you ask it," said the lady, "but if you will come here, I should like to kiss you, if I may." And Helen sat on the edge of the bed for half an hour. Not that they were sentimental at all. That would have spoiled it all for Helen. But Mrs. Moore kissed her once heartily and fondly, and then they talked of everything and were friends.

In a few weeks Harry Moore was taking daily lessons of Professor ——, Helen's old French drawing-master (the best in X——), who was delighted with the boy's taste and skill, and prophesied great things of him. Miss Roberts also, now quite practiced in the sign language, had a pupil daily in history and algebra. Mrs. Moore begged to keep the Latin as long as she was able, but she was failing constantly now.

These things, with the making herself at home in the library, and the German readings which she kept up, albeit a little dolefully, and the letters to Oxford, and the weekly dinner at Uncle Roger's, and the consolations of the young minister, and the droppings in of the friendly ladies, preserved our young lady from *ennui*, and made the days hurry on towards Christmas.

Aunt Matilda and Lily were very friendly, but as they "went out" so much and Helen so little, they did not meet so often as might have been the case.

"I must go and see them oftener," said Helen to herself (having nobody else to talk to, you perceive that this young lady talks a great deal to herself); "I must go oftener. Lily wonders where I can be, when she calls in the mornings and finds me out. She thinks it is queer that I only go there when I'm invited. It *is* queer. It isn't right." So she went around that very morning, for a little call, on her way down town.

Aunt Matilda was in the up-stairs sitting-room, busily engaged on a white muslin over-dress. "We're trying to get it done for Mrs. Howe's to-night. There have been so many parties this week that Lily has worn almost every thing she has, except the pink and point lace. She's saving that for Mrs. Smith's, next week. This over the blue silk will be a pretty change. We *did* think we could make something else do (the bed was piled high with silks and laces), but Emma Raymond came in and said that she was going to wear lilac, and Jenny Osborne is going to wear lilac—so lilac wouldn't do, and we've been *so* troubled about it, but finally decided on this."

The seamstress was busy, in another room, on the waist, and Lily, tired out and listless, was working away on a ruffle. Both the ladies confessed themselves "perfectly used up" with the week's dissipations. Helen happily bethought herself in time, and offered to take another ruffle and sew for awhile.

"Oh, that's charming of you, dear, and stay to lunch; why can't you? and let me send the carriage away."

So the call lengthened out into quite a visit, and would have been a very pleasant and chatty one, if the ladies had not been so exceedingly tired.

"Why must you go to-night, Lily?" Helen ventured to ask.

"That's just what father says," said Lily. "He says he doesn't see why we will come home and scold about one party, and work all day to go to another. But nobody knows any thing about it who isn't in society. You would understand it, if you went out more. And, then, if you could dance and carry on, you would feel differently. Why, *of course*, I must go."

"We owe *some* duties to society," said Aunt Matilda, who always uttered that solemn truth with an implicit faith that was beautiful to behold. "And then—why, Mrs. Howe was here last week at our little company, and she would think it very strange—and the Gleasons, cousins of the Huntingtons, from Chicago, are here. They thought they were going to carry every thing before them, the girls say. They are extremely stylish and very sweet girls—but Lily's Paris dresses have rather taken them down. Oh, certainly, I think Lily *ought* to go to Mrs. Howe's."

This process of reasoning appeared unanswerable, and Helen kept silence.

"I wish you could go to the sociables, dear," added the kind-hearted woman, noticing a serious look on Helen's face. "Do you know, I think, by spring you might begin to go out,—in a black silk and white over-dress, or something of the kind. I think it would be quite proper. Why, Mary Blake, whose step-brother died in July, was at the party last night—only five months; and, in your case, where there is no relationship—"

Helen's face grew hot. She thought it was about time to go, and went to the window to look for Peter, and cool herself down a little. "I believe Aunt Matilda sincerely pities me because I don't go to these affairs," she thought, pressing her forehead against the cool pane. "People tell about the butterfly giddiness of the 'votaries of pleasure.' It isn't that that appalls me. It is the dead earnest they are in—the hard work they do—the solemnity of the thing." And, having relieved herself by these reflections, she went back to the ruffles and sewed half an hour longer.

Then Peter came, and they went down among the gay and crowded shops. It was the day before Christmas, and the streets were full of smiling, busy, happy people. Bless God for Christmas! for the one day in the year when every body loves and every body is loved; when the little children and the poor are near to every body's heart,

> "And those that scarcely all the year
> Had bread to eat or rags to wear,
> Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
> And all the day be merry."

Helen drove back along the avenue out towards the golden winter sunset, with her lap full of various paper parcels, big and little, for the Christmas of her household, but indulging nevertheless in a strain of selfish melancholy. To-morrow would be her birthday. Twenty-one, and all alone!

That very Christmas eve, looking at the same golden sunset, another girl, a little older than Helen, came up the avenue. She was walking briskly, but Miss Roberts' carriage passed her just before it reached her house and turned in under the arched gateway. From the depot across the city to Shady street was a long walk, and one need be brisk on such a frosty evening. Susy Converse hurried along, her black eyes shining and her cheeks glowing, though there was nobody to see in the gathering darkness. At length she stopped before a small house, and putting down her bag on the door-step and taking a key from her pocket, she opened the door with as little noise as possible. "I guess mother doesn't know I have my key with me. I'll astonish her," she thought. She felt her way through a dark and narrow hall, and suddenly opened the door, as far as it would open, into a brightly-lighted little sitting-room. In the middle of the floor, in a statuesque attitude, stood a funny little woman, dressed in a purple and black brocade silk, with remarkable arrangements of pink ribbons and black lace at the top of her head. Her dark hair was brushed smoothly down on her cheek, after the fashion of the bonnet-blocks one may sometimes see to this day in an old-fashioned milliner's shop, and then carried back to fall behind her ear in two small curls. This little lady was evidently in the midst of a profound curtsey when the door opened, and the object of her homage was the tall, light-haired amused-looking young man whose back, opposed to the opened door, had formed the obstacle to Susy's immediate progress. The statuesque little lady was evidently very much horrified by this sudden irruption, but she allowed her daughter to kiss her, and recovered herself sufficiently to perform the ceremony of introduction between the bright-faced girl and the amused-looking young man.

"This is my daughter, Mr. Williams; and Susan, my dear, this is Mr. Williams, who is so kind as to occupy the upper rooms of the house and act as my protector during your absence. You cannot think what a relief it is, my dear. I should never be able to sleep a wink, if it were not for having Mr. Williams in the house."

Mr. Williams, with becoming modesty, and with an exercise of economy worthy of his position as head clerk at Haberdasher's, covered introduction, compliment and exit with one bow and so departed.

"I am exceedingly mortified, my dear. I had hoped to introduce you under more auspicious circumstances. Mr. Williams is a very superior young man, and your hair is *so* blown about. But I have invited him to partake of our Christmas dinner with us."

"Oh, mother — well, are you glad to see me?"

"Of course, my dear, I am glad to see you. Did you bring that valise from the depot, my dear child?"

"Yes, mother."

"Just like her father," murmured the little lady, with a sigh. "No idea whatever of gentility. Why, Mr. Converse would frequently go out in his shirt sleeves and work in the garden all day. He usually spent his Saturdays so, though I always told him it was unworthy of his position as schoolmaster."

Susy, not thinking it necessary to remark that by bringing the bag she had saved fifty cents which she had put into a bunch of celery (Mrs. Converse's "particular wanity") for to-morrow's dinner, went cheerily about the room, getting off her things and stirring up the fire.

"Had tea, mother?"

"No, my dear; I have only made a few little preparations. You know it is difficult for me to bring my mind to these things. I was *so* differently brought up—in the very lap of luxury, as you may say. I feel it so keenly;" and the poor little woman shook out a large handkerchief, with a very deep lace edging, and applied it to her eyes. It looked as if it might possibly be one she had taken from Luxury's pocket when she sat in her lap a great many years ago.

"My little waiting-maid," the lady continued, "the little Ann of whom I wrote you, left me last night. She complained that it was cold sitting in the kitchen in the evening. Of course, in our reduced circumstances (and Mrs. Converse lowered her voice to a whisper lest the young gentleman up-stairs should, by any possibility, have "reduced circumstances" suggested to his mind) it was not possible for me to keep two fires through the evening. The child's mother actually proposed that she should sit in this room with me! I don't know what we shall do now for a girl."

"I do," said Susy, under her breath. "Where do you keep your butter, mother?"

"I am not sure where I put it. Look in the wardrobe, my dear. You know, as I have often told you, I am quite unaccustomed to these things."

"How about the class in wax-flowers and the ornamental branches?" asked Susy, possibly with a view to diverting the good lady's reminiscences.

"Ah, well, my dear—there is so little taste for art in these days. I have handed about my papers in our small circle of acquaintance, and two young ladies, friends of Miss Hurlburt's, I believe, came in one morning. One took a lesson in writing, and the other began a rosebud, but—they were called out of town, I believe."

"Just as well, little mother—just as well. You know I did n't want you to do anything of the kind. You have enough to do to take care of yourself and keep well. I'm strong enough for the rest."

"I have tried to make a few preparations for to-morrow, my dear," said the little lady, quite touched by Susy's tenderness. "And our good friend, Miss Hurlburt, has assisted me. Miss Hurlburt is an excellent creature. She lacks refinement, but she has some excellent traits."

"The most magnificent woman I ever saw," said Susy, tersely.

Before the tea-things were washed and put away, the object of these diverse expressions of approbation brought a pleasant face to the sitting-room door.

"I thought so," she said brightly, following the pleasant face with a tall, vigorous form and a hearty voice, and kissing Susy.

"You found you could come to-night."

"By a little pushing; yes, and I wanted to come. Mother likes to go to church Christmas morning, and I thought I'd like to go with her," and she glanced toward the adjoining room where Mrs. Converse, with about the grace of a wax-figure, sat motionless in the rocking-chair. She did not consider it genteel to rock. Miss Hurlburt, meanwhile took up a towel and wiped dishes vigorously.

"Well, Susy?" she said, at length, inquiringly.

"Well, Miss Hurlburt, I've done it. I told Mr. Clark I could n't teach there another term. I knew I ought to."

"I've been talking to the Board ever since you were here last," said Miss Hurlburt, a little anxiously. "I've been to Mr. Smith and to Mr. Thomson—all round the Board, in fact," and she laughed; "and I've cracked you up—you ought to have heard me. They say they have no doubt you're a good teacher and all that, but their list of applicants is full already, and being from another State, you know ——"

"Oh, I've given up the Board long ago," said Susy. "Thank you for trying, though. But I'm going to do something else. I'm going to sew. It will shock mother, I know; but I don't see how I can help it. She needs me, and I can't be with her any other way. What do you think?"

"You're a good girl, Susy Converse, that's what I think, and I'm proud of you," said this blessed old maid, squeezing the girl's hand under the table-cloth till it ached.

"As for the work itself, I like it well enough," said Susy, greatly brightened up by the squeeze, though it did hurt. "I like it quite as well, and think it's quite as intellectual as drilling a regiment of babies in '*so* the farmer sows his seed,' and '*so* the baker bakes his bake;' and that's all I've got to get, all I could get to for a year or two. The other part—I dread it a little, and yet we are nobodies already in X——; my doing this can't make us more so. The only thing is, I don't know where to begin. I don't know anybody that wants a sewing girl."

"Don't be worried about that. Just you wait a few days. I'll see what I can do. I guess you had better put a line in the paper, and then you keep still. The Lord will provide. You see if He don't."

"I wish He had more people like you to help Him," said Susy, heartily."

A few days after this, when the new year had fairly set in, Miss Hurlburt sat by her sunny window rocking, knitting a red and white baby's stocking, and singing "Devizes." It was a little, low-ceiled room, the third story back of a small house on Shady street. The walls were papered in a gloomy shade of ultramarine, sprinkled with mammoth rosebuds in purplish pink, and over the head of the little single bed, hung Miss Hurlburt's only and well-beloved picture—a colored lithograph of three white kittens playing with a branch of lilac. This was framed gorgeously in gilt, and made a bright spot in that dark corner. Miss Hurlburt looked up at it fondly as she rocked, and stopped her knitting and her singing twenty times a day, when she spent a day at home, to laugh at the "pretty creatures" tumbling over each other in their innocent but stupid gambols.

But to-day her eye sought oftener the broad, honest face of the old mahogany clock that squinted at her in a friendly way from behind the stovepipe. "This was another favorite. Nobody knows how much company a good clock is," she used to say, as she came stumbling up her crazy staircase of a dark, cold night, and heard its lusty voice ticking faithfully away. The clock was pointing now towards one, and Miss Hurlburt thought it time to roll up her knitting and prepare to be going. "It begins at two o'clock," she said, "and I'll just step in to Mrs. Stevens and see how that baby is on the way."

Miss Hurlburt's mirror of about a foot square, hung over her wash-stand at the right hand of the window that was not sunny. From the drawer of this same wash-stand, Miss Hurlburt carefully abstracted a large collar, heavily embroidered in grape-vines, and edged with three rows of big, round holes. This she exchanged, before the little mirror, for the linen band that had finished the neck of her plain brown dress. Miss Hurlburt's dress was dark brown, and made in the most open defiance of the dress of the period. This was because she was a sensible woman, above the pomps and vanities of the world. But where is the woman that has not a weakness? Miss Hurlburt had a weakness for embroidered collars. Her heart was as soft before the rows of flapping white things in Jones' window, marked in blue letters "25 c.," "40 c.," "awful sacrifice," "going at $1.00," as yours was, my dear, this morning, before that lovely Roman sash and that little violet plush sacque that you saw on Silver street, and had the obliging clerk send up "for mamma to look at."

Miss Hurlburt's pleasant face grew pleasanter as she smoothed down the big collar, and laboriously pinned it with the little red ivory brooch, set with steel diamonds, which Mrs. Stevens had given her on Christmas day. Then she mounted a trunk in her closet and took down carefully, from the top shelf, a band-box of large dimensions enclosed in a flowery chintz bag, fearfully and wonderfully made, with complicated arrangements of strings at top and bottom. In this sacred edifice, was enshrined the brown bonnet with purple flowers inside, which had been Miss Hurlburt's best for three seasons. Next she put on the large woolen shawl with pink streaks running through the brown plaids on the border, and then she made her way down the three dim staircases, out into the cold air. She had been some minutes in the street before she drew out of her pocket a pair of cotton gloves, and rapidly projected her fingers into them as she walked along. "I'm glad I put my knitting work in my pocket," she said, to herself. "Very likely there won't be enough cut out at first, and I can knit after supper and between times."

Miss Hurlburt stopped at Mrs. Stevens' as she had proposed. Mr. Stevens was journeyman tailor at the shop for which she works. Mr. Stevens' house was a narrow, dingy, insignificant dwelling, of that class less known by well-to-do people than the homes of the very poor. A foot-path across the snow of the narrow side yard led to the back door. The front door looked as if it had never been opened. Miss Hurlburt took the foot-path and was soon in the "keeping-room" with the sick and the young mother. The baby was very white and pinched looking; the mother was very pale and anxious.

"Let me take him," said Miss Hurlburt, as the poor wee thing set up a feeble wail. "He's in pain. Poor little thing! Come here to your old aunty. Let me rub his little *stomik*," and she rubbed, and trotted, and rocked, and crowed over the little morsel of human misery, as if she had never done anything but tend babies in her life. "There. He's quiet now. I guess he'll go to sleep. I'll come in again on my way home from society."

"Society" was held to-day at Mrs. Smith's on the avenue, next door to Miss Roberts', and Miss Hurlburt soon arrived at the elegant mansion. Only a few ladies had gathered as yet in the spacious parlors. Miss Hurlburt very soon took her place in a small back room, and fell to work on a bed-quilt. When she came back, a little before tea, the quilt being off and the knitting-work fairly under weigh, the rooms were full and she stood for a moment looking about for a seat and dispensing bows and smiles on all sides. Over in the corner by a window, sat Helen Roberts, making button-holes. Mrs. Smith had so urged her to come. "The work was very pressing. They wanted to get off a box this week. Only a sewing-society, and at a neighbor's." The minister, also, who had called last night, strongly advised and urged her coming, and, on the present occasion, followed up his advice, by sharing her divan for at least half an hour, and manifesting great interest in the button-holes. She was looking a little lonely just at this moment, and very pretty in her heavy black silk and the soft, white ruffles about her neck and wrists. The fact was, that Miss Roberts was apt to be—not at all avoided—but somewhat left to herself in a company like this, composed with a single exception, of women. The old reserve had not quite worn off, and people saw it, and called it by different names according to the glasses they saw it through. Some thought her haughty. Some thought her only quiet. Some felt a tender kind of awe of her, because of her loneliness and her affliction. Some were afraid of her because she was rich.

Miss Hurlburt had none of these feelings. She would not have understood them, if they had come to her. It was the nature of her mind (second nature, induced by long habit) to turn, without a single consideration of any other kind, just where it seemed at the moment that she might be of a little use. "Silks and satins need a little missionarying as well as rags," she often said, and acted on the principle. She walked straight over to Helen, almost as soon as she saw her. "You look a little bit lonely—not very, though," as Helen looked up and smiled.

"I shall be very glad of company," said Helen, and she moved to make a place on the little divan. She knew Miss Hurlburt, of course. Everybody did. The two women—the one fair and young, dressed in rich silk, and diamonds sparkling on her hand; the other, wrinkled and old, in a brown merino dress, and one little washed gold ring on her finger: these two women somehow came nearer together in a few minutes than any other two women in the whole large company probably were. It was the love and interest on the one side, and the candor and teachableness on the other. They had their tea together, in the most sociable manner, on a little marble chess-stand, and, by a coincidence a little surprising to both, they started up to go at the same moment, very shortly after tea. When they reached the porch, it was found to be raining. Peter, with the carriage, was at hand. It was the regular evening for Uncle Roger, and as Lily had a western friend visiting her, Helen had promised particularly to come, without fail, to-night.

"Miss Hurlburt, you had better ride. I am going your way."

"Thank you, Miss Roberts; but I am not going directly home. I have a call to make in D street."

"Then let me take you there. It is raining too hard for you to walk," and Miss Hurlburt, whose cordial and ready acceptance of small favors from the rich was one of her strong points, allowed herself to be shut in among the soft satin cushions.

"Miss Hurlburt, do you happen to know of a good seamstress?" said Helen, conversation lagging as they rolled down the avenue.

"*There,*—thank the Lord! *Of course,* I do. Didn't I say he would provide?" Then, apparently reining herself up suddenly and dropping into a business tone, "Yes, I know of one."

"A good one, of course?"

"Yes, I can recommend her. She has worked for me."

"Where is she to be found?"

"At No. 59 Shady street."

And though Helen's curiosity was all agog, that was all she could by any means get out of her old friend, without resorting to direct questions. But that the subject had not dropped out of Miss Hurlburt's mind, a very brief glance at that lively oracle would have shown.

"Now, I declare, if that is n't just the best thing for both of those girls, I never *did* see! How He *does* bring things out! I declare it's worth living for just to see how He manages these little things."

And the plain woman's plain old face was all aglow in the dark with her thoughts.

The carriage soon drew up before the journeyman tailor's little house. "Won't you come in?

There's a little sick baby here. They would be glad to see you."

"No, I think not, Miss Hurlburt, I do not know them,"

"Just as you please," said Miss Hurlburt, pleasantly.

It was not the tone; it was the words. If Miss Hurlburt had said any thing else, Miss Roberts would not have stirred. But those words—*just as you please*—had a hateful sound to her ears. She had lived by them too long. Without a word more, she followed the tall woman across the foot-path to the back door.

"Oh," said Miss Hurlburt, "I thought you were not coming!" But she held the door open with a smile, and Helen passed into the house.

The little keeping-room was full of busy, kind, officious women, talking in loud whispers and passing in and out of a tiny bed-room. The baby was dying. In a few minutes Miss Hurlburt came out of the bed-room with her bonnet-strings untied, and told Helen not to wait for her. She was going to stay all night. But she brought a lamp to the back door and held it over her head to light the path, and called the little journeyman tailor to help Miss Roberts to her carriage.

"I wonder," she said, as Helen put out her hand for good-night, "would you like to bring around a few white flowers in the morning. I shall be here."

"I will, certainly," said Helen, and went back to her carriage.

The call, of course, had done nobody any good, except as a glimpse into any human life may do good to a thoughtful mind.

The next morning Miss Roberts had been practicing vigorously for an hour and a half, before the thought of the white flowers came to her mind. After she thought of them, she finished her long series of studies, took up another sheet and played a page and threw it away, took up another, played half a page, and then stopped suddenly in the midst of a measure. "No, it won't do after dinner—the next time I see Dennis, and Bridget can't tell him just as well what I want, and it is n't just as well to let Mitty take them," she said, with a gleam like indignation in her eye. She left the piano, took a white sacque and a little fleecy white head-covering from the closet in the hall, and went down the garden to the green-house. It was a lovely, mild January morning, after the rain, the snow almost entirely melted away. The young mistress, it must be confessed, stood in some awe of her gardener; but she feigned great boldness, and snapped her scissors in a decided way. "Dennis, I've come for some more of those rosebuds, the handsomest you have, and some of those white carnations, and lots of green smilax and geranium leaves, and something light to fill up with." Then she gathered her robes daintily about her and sat down on the edge of a shelf, winking vigorously, when Dennis, by a dexterous movement, made the leaves conceal some special favorite, and looking the other way as the shears passed by something she had set her heart on.

This matter being settled, she turned her attention to Peter. But if Dennis was absolute in the green-house, what was Peter in the carriage-house? That man had a special genius for washing the carriage, or combing the horses, or discovering that a shoe was loose, just when his services were most needed in another direction. The carriage stood now in floods of water, and Peter, with determination in every line of his ebony visage, leaned against the barn-door, and ruthlessly spurted on more. "Never 'sposed you'd want it dis yer mornin', miss" (it was by far the most delightful day they had had that winter), "and de snow's off so bad we can't use the sleigh, no how. 'Pears like you'll have to wait till afternoon, miss."

Miss Roberts went in with her flowers, and looked out of the library window. As she stood there, one hand and arm clasping the back of a large crimson chair to help the support of the slender form, the other hand slightly holding the basket of white flowers, the white sacque loosely drawn about her, the fleecy head-dress dropping from her brown hair, a glow on her cheek, a problem on her forehead, she made a very pretty picture. Harry Moore would have been charmed. It was a pity there was nobody to see. Girls are so often most sweet and charming when there is nobody to see. "It isn't far, and the pavements are so nicely cleaned—not slippery at all—and the doctor says I ought to walk a little every day. It is only this wretched, horrid—what *is* the feeling, I wonder?—down in my heart—that I am always thinking I have got over, and that comes back when I least expect it. I think Lily stirred it up the other day by those little words about my feeling differently, if I could 'dance and carry on.'" She sat down thereupon. It tired her to stand long. She sat down, and the basket of flowers lay carelessly on her lap, and the glow faded on her cheek, and the problem deepened on her forehead.

A little before one o'clock, when Miss Hurlburt had cleared away the simple dinner with that stillness and decorum which one uses in a house where Death is a guest, she heard a knock at the back door, and, answering it, found Helen Roberts.

"Oh, is it you? And you walked? You must be tired."

The young lady confessed to being a little tired, but she was looking very bright. To hide a kind of pleased confusion at Miss Hurlburt's warm welcome, which, somehow to her, standing behind the scenes, seemed to mean more than the mere words said, she bent her head and devoted herself to unpinning the paper over her flowers. Miss Hurlburt admired, as much as one could have wished, yet she evidently had something on her mind.

"Now, if you are not in a hurry," she said, presently, "while you are resting; if you could just make them up into a pretty wreath. It would please the mother so."

"I thought she would so much rather arrange them herself. That is just why I brought them so," said Helen, astonished.

Miss Hurlburt smiled.

"So *you would*, my dear; so *you* would rather arrange them yourself; but you've no idea how much some people—such people as these—think of having things done as *they should* be, in the right style. It is a great thing to have a young lady like you come in and make a wreath. Now, they know, I'm *willing* enough; but when it comes to matters of taste, why, I'm nobody. But you know just how it should be, and they would be sure that it was right, if you did it."

Helen was going to be disgusted. Style at funerals! This was the effect, natural enough, too, of the ghastly vanity that had so often shocked her among the rich—the lower classes gaping after the shows and follies of the other.

She was going to be disgusted, I say, and reason with herself on this wise, but something in Miss Hurlburt's tone, as she merely asked if she should bring twine and wire and begin at once, changed the current of the young girl's thoughts.

"Find out men's wants and will, and meet them there," she said. "What a fool I am!

There's little enough of charity in doing a kindness in one's own way. The very essence of the thing, the *love* is in the special suiting of the gift—the studying of the want—as God does when He gives gifts. For He knoweth our frame. He remembereth!"

Miss Hurlburt took her into the dim, little parlor where the dead baby lay, still and white, and the two women sprinkled flowers over his pillow—the softest and peacefullest his little life had ever known, and twined the garland for his tiny coffin, and spoke little and in quiet voices. It was very strange to Helen. How fast things were coming to her! How old she was growing!

" Who would have thought a joy
So coy,
To be offended so
And go
So suddenly away?
Hereafter I had need,
Take heed.
Joys, among other things, have wings,
Converting, in a moment, day to night."

[illegible]

CHAPTER X.

MRS. CONVERSE was indulging in an early dinner. The morning had been a trifle dull, and, as she remarked, on recounting the circumstances to her lodger in the evening, she had not been looking for callers. Moreover, she had been intent on the construction of a lemon-colored wax rose, which, when full blown, was to adorn Miss Hurlburt's apartment. For these reasons, Mrs. Converse had allowed herself to remain in a state of unprecedented *déshabille;* her front hair in curling-papers, and a loose, crimson morning wrapper enveloping her usually trim and tidy figure.

A little exhausted by her labor, and weary of her lonely condition (for Susy was at the journeyman tailor's making her first essay at the dress-making life), the worthy little lady had, by no means, disdained the very ungenteel repast of pork and cabbage which Miss Hurlburt had sent in about twelve o'clock, and was partaking of it, at this moment, by her parlor table, with evident relish.

Under these circumstances, a sudden ring of the door-bell was a little disconcerting, and, when Mrs. Converse, looking out of the window, beheld an aristocratic establishment standing in all the glory of liveried coachman and shining horses before her humble door, she was thrown into a flutter positively alarming. Visions of rich old gentlemen, struck by Susy's beauty, or — who knows? *Her* head-dresses were universally acknowledged to be very becoming, and her complexion (with the help of a little alabaster) was really remarkably fine—by her own, perhaps, and come to cast their fortunes at her feet; reminiscences of loving school-mates, whose affection had, perhaps, survived the tempests of fortune, and who had now sought her out in her retirement and widowhood; these and even wilder fancies rushed across her fevered brain, as she hastily removed the outward and visible signs of her interrupted feast from the parlor table.

It was none other than Helen Roberts at the door, who, having rung the bell twice, with no effect beyond a general sound of shutting of doors and scuffing across passages, was about to turn away; but, at the third attempt, the amused-looking young lodger, home for his morning, felt called upon to make some effort to find the family, and, not succeeding (for Mrs. Converse had by this time intrenched herself in her bedroom), opened the door with his finest bow.

Helen entered the little room where the hastily-spread table-cover was dropping to the floor, and the rocking-chair was in violent motion from the many shocks administered during Mrs. Converse's flight.

"I am quite sure one of them must be in," said the amused-looking young man. "I will look again."

The visitor, thus oddly admitted, had ample time to study the small apartment, and did it a little curiously. She noted, with interest, the monochromatic castles and moons and gondolas that garnished the walls, and looked with amazement on the mammoth wax dahlias and lilies on the mantel-piece. Only one corner of the room looked natural and simple. This was the recess back of the fire-place, where there was a low cane rocking-chair, and a little stand with a red cover, on which were a dainty work-basket lined with blue silk, a newspaper, a fresh magazine, and a volume of miscellaneous essays.

In process of time Mrs. Converse appeared, a trifle more tightly laced than usual, her brocade skirts a trifle more sweeping, her black hair on her white cheek a trifle smoother, and the two curls stiff from the curling stick. A bright color induced by her recent unparalleled exercise broke through the rouge and alabaster.

She exceedingly regretted having detained her young friend so long. She was not in a vigorous state of health, and was obliged to pass the greater part of her time reclining on her couch.

Mrs. Converse, it will be observed, was one of those persons who always regret things, but never feel sorry, who detain their friends but do not keep them waiting, who recline but never lie down. Under-educated people are conspicuously fond of talking Latin. At the time the bell rang, Mrs. Converse continued, the maid had stepped out, but a young gentleman visitor had been so kind, etc., etc. She trusted the delay had not incommoded Miss Roberts. Helen made the suitable disclaimers and stated her errand in few words. It was evidently a shock to the waxy little lady. The color struck through the rouge more visibly. But she mastered herself well. "Yes, Susy had recently returned from school, really quite debilitated by severe intellectual exertions. She was very fond of needle-work. She believed she had consented—for the accommodation of a few friends—really—she did not know how her daughter would feel about it—not at all a common seamstress—but to accommodate—as a friend—possibly."

"I hope she can come," said Helen, simply. "If she can, will you be so kind as to ask her to call and see me in a few days," and she was about to leave.

"Perhaps you have noticed," said Mrs. Converse, rising, and assuming the statuesque attitude, "perhaps you have noticed, Miss Roberts, the works of art which hang about the room."

Helen could not deny that she had noticed them.

"You will pardon my calling your attention to them, since they are my own productions, but I have been studying your face—I am very good at studying faces—and I fancied that you might be interested in them. *I* am exceedingly fond of art myself, and I have sometimes consented, at the request of some of my young friends, to give a few instructions in some of those ornamental branches, which are so much neglected by the young ladies of the present day—wax flowers, painting on velvet, embroidery, and also in penmanship, which I consider a very important branch. This gives me mental occupation, and my nature craves that and society. I dearly like to have the young about me. For though I am growing old and faded, (here the little lady coughed delicately and waited for the compliment which Helen was not quick-witted enough to offer), my feelings are still young and fresh. Here, my dear, is a little statement, in my own hand-writing, which I drew up for a former class of pupils."

Mrs. Converse omitted to mention that this was the same class whose history we have heard her recount to her daughter on a former occasion.

Helen took the sheet and read as follows, in the most elaborate of copper-plate hands:

"Mrs. A. C. Converse,
(Widow of the late lamented A. C. Converse, Esq., for many years the respected Principal of the Windham County Institute)

Has Consented
To impart Instruction
To a limited number of Young Ladies
in the following branches:
Wax Flowers!

(Mrs. C. thinks it proper to state in this connection, that a *Basket of Flowers* from her hand, took the *First Premium* at the County Fair of Windham County, in the year of our Lord, 1847, and received the most flattering notices from the local press.)

Painting on Velvet!
Painting on Satin!

(Mrs. C. may mention, under this head, that a large-sized painting on *Blue Satin*, representing the *Evils of Intemperance*, was purchased of her by the *Cold Water Union* of the town of *Windham*, and now hangs in their new and commodious *Hall*.)

Monochromatic Painting!
(Easily learned in Six Lessons.)
Pastel Painting!
Shell-Work, in all varieties!
Embroidery!
Ornamental Penmanship!

The advancement of her pupils being more of an object than pecuniary reward, Mrs. C. has fixed the price of her instructions at the low sum of $20.00 per course, of *twelve lessons*."

Helen despised wax-flowers, and wrote a very good hand indeed, but something in the faded gentility of this little woman went to her heart. Her smile was a mixture of amusement and kindness. "Thank you, Mrs. Converse, I will take the paper if you please, and perhaps I will see."

She continued to think of the subject as she drove away. "I don't know that I have any special objections to learning to paint on satin, and I really suppose the twenty dollars would be a good deal to her. But if I don't, perhaps, as Mrs. Converse suggested, 'some of my young friends' may." There were the Parvenu girls, three of them. She was just passing their house. She was not intimately acquainted with these young ladies, but she had sat behind their bonnets in church for many years, and felt tolerably certain that they would be interested in wax-flowers and the ornamental branches. "Peter, I wish you would stop here," she called out suddenly.

The young ladies were not in, but Mrs. P—— was. Miss Roberts would see Mrs. P——. She waited for that lady in a parlor that smelled like a furniture shop, and at length, covered with smiles and graciousness, the lady came down. Greatly tickled within herself by the brilliancy of her sudden idea, and the fun that might come out of it, Helen unfolded her plan and exhibited Mrs. Converse's "statement."

"Why, how kind you was!" exclaimed Mrs. P——, increasing in smiles and graciousness, if that were possible. "The girls will be delighted, I know. They was a sayin' only a few days ago, they wished they knew how to make wax dahlias like them they had at the Sanitary. Do you remember?"

Helen did not remember.

"You are goin' to take yourself, I believe you said?"

"Yes," said Helen, deciding on the instant.

"When do you begin?" asked Mrs. P——, studying the trimming on Helen's overskirt, and settling in her mind that Laviny's cashmere, now being made over, should be treated in the same manner.

"Any time—as soon as possible, I should think. Perhaps one of the girls will come around and tell me when they are ready, and then we will arrange with Mrs. Converse. And I think we had better pay in advance," added the young lady, grown very business-like.

"Yes, certainly, (that's box-plaited and goes 'round three times, twice layin' down, and once standin' up, I hope I shall remember), good-bye, I'm *very* much obliged to you, *won't* you stay to dinner? (It's looped up with a strap, that's a real pretty way, and new, too), well, good-bye, if you can't stay," and Miss Roberts went her way, having made a most unexpected morning-call.

The history of the class in the ornamental branches is brief, and may as well be given here.

The Misses Parvenu began a dahlia a-piece—red, white and blue—this happy idea being Mrs. Converse's own. Helen painted a daisy on a piece of lavender ribbon, and two years afterwards added another thereunto, and made a necktie for Miss Prescott. But before half the course of lessons was completed, it became clear that Mrs. Converse's talents lay not so much in the line of imparting instruction, as in entertaining her young friends by the exhibition of her own elegant accomplishments, and chiefly of her conversational powers. It was difficult, moreover, she confessed, for her to confine her mind to the details of a dahlia's petals. It was altogether distasteful to her sensitive organism, to attend to the preparation of the materials—Susy always did that for her work. In addition to these things, the mental excitement induced by this constant exercise of her artistic talents was too much for her delicate physical nature.

"Why, dear, I fear I am not adapted to this drudgery," she privately confided to Helen. "The fact is, I was brought up in the lap of luxury," and Luxury's handkerchief here came out again. "It is almost impossible for me to learn to exert myself. I have greatly enjoyed your society and that of your young friends. I thank you for it."

So after a painful and lingering existence, (for Miss Laviny, of the blue dahlia, insisted on coming once a week till all but one row of her petals was done), this school of the fine arts died a natural death.

Susy, meanwhile, had begun to work at Miss Roberts'. She had made her first call at the fine house with many fears and shrinkings. She knew enough about rich people to dread them. She could n't get used to thinking of herself as that "very respectable young person" of whom she had heard grand people speak. She had no false ideas of her position; she wished and intended to be a sewing-girl and nothing more; nevertheless, flesh and blood shrank a little.

She wished that all her day's works might be in houses as little as the journeyman tailor's. However, on the occasion of this first call, nobody more terrible than Mitty made her appearance, who, in Miss Roberts's absence, was authorized to engage Miss Converse for a week's work, to begin next Monday.

Susy remembers with distinctness everything that happened that first Monday at Miss Roberts's. She came early, in the winter morning, and was admitted at first into the library, where the maid was brushing up the hearth, and a bright fire was blazing. Then she was called up-stairs to a charming little blue room, which she afterwards learned opened from Miss Roberts's bed-room.

The morning sun, as soon as he was up, peeped in here with a cheery look, and brightened her up immensely.

Here, too, Mitty soon looked in, and set her to work on a gray poplin which Miss Roberts was to have made over.

On the lounge lay half a dozen other dresses, which were to have something done to them. Susy studied them a little, and tried to draw from them some idea of their wearer. "Light complexion, I guess." They were all soft colors—grays, lilacs, lavenders, and one or two white morning wrappers—"good taste"—they were so daintily made; not fussy in the least; "and neat, I know, she is."

It was not till the middle of the morning that Miss Roberts came in. She left the door open, and one could look through into the larger room upon a round table where she had evidently just been writing, and a portrait of a beautiful lady hanging over it. Miss Roberts herself sat down on the lounge, and hung her arm over one of the lavender dresses.

"Good morning," she said. "I am glad you could come. You see these dresses are needing you."

Susy Converse was a quick, little thing; impulsive is the usual word for that sort of girl. She had a mind of her own, and it moved rapidly. She gave one broad glance at Helen, at her graceful neck and shoulders; at her delicate mouth, with its smile which meant just enough, and lingered just long enough at her clear, deep eyes; at her broad, pure forehead; she noted the pure, genuine tone of her voice as she spoke these simplest and lightest of pleasant words, and she said in her heart, "I love her." But she did not show it in the least. She had learned her trade too well for that. She only bowed the most proper of sewing-girl's bows and smiled.

There were a few words more about the work in hand, and then Miss Roberts went out in her carriage. Susy did not see her again till evening, when she came in to pay her and try on a dress.

"I like this," she said, decidedly. Susy noted the voice again, and took comfort in it, it was so true. "I shall want you more than the one week, I know. Can't you come next week, and then a day or two here and there all winter?"

Susy liked this; being taken in on the merits of her work. Thus far the two girls seemed to understand one another. If Miss Hurlburt had looked in she would have gone away nodding her head with satisfaction.

Before the two weeks were up, there was a succession of rainy days, and Miss Roberts was more at home. The door stood open sometimes now between the blue room and the larger chamber. To be sure Miss Roberts spent the larger part of these rainy mornings in the library, giving a lesson to a little deaf and dumb boy of whom Mitty had told Susy something. And, besides, she practiced a great deal. But she had a way, as all girls have, of fussing about her own room more or less, looking over the ribbons and trinkets in her upper drawer, or mending her dainty gloves, and her favorite place for reading was a large arm-chair by the window that looked into the garden. Gradually the two girls talked more and more together, and on subjects not connected with dressmaking.

From her chair by the window Helen would stop her reading to say a word to the sewing-girl, or read a passage aloud which she thought she might enjoy.

And so the winter was going. Spring was coming, and changes were coming with it. The visits to Mowry's building were more and more frequent, but shorter. Mrs. Moore was failing fast.

One February evening, when Helen had gone in for the briefest of calls with a little jelly and some fresh Neapolitan violets, she sat down on the edge of the bed in the twilight, and a question that had been weighing on the hearts of both these women for months was settled in a few short words. Harry was to go to Helen. She had longed to ask for this, but had not dared till now. She would make of him all she could. She would love him faithfully like a sister, so long as they both should live. She took the trust humbly, with bowed head, and with his dying mother's blessing.

Before long, the time came. It could be but a sad time at best, but Helen had never so put her whole heart into the happiness of any human being as she did now into Harry's. She deliberately determined it. She worked for it. The fitting up of a little studio in the tower, and of the room in the third story at the foot of the tower stairs had purposely been left till now that there might be all possible means to divert the boy's mind and interest him in his new life.

There were excursions to the city to choose the wall-paper and carpets, and included in these excursions were visits to whatever was most attractive in the city. Helen got an introduction from Professor Poussin to some one at the Academy of Design, and, to Harry's great delight, he was soon enrolled as a pupil of that institution, and was to go down twice a week to his lessons.

On coming home from the city one evening, Helen found a new card on the stand in the hall. The name and the handwriting were familiar. *John Wright.*

"Where did this come from? Who knows anything about it?" asked the little mistress, a pleased, bright flush coming to her cheek.

The waiting-maid, taking Miss Roberts's bag and parcels, only knew that a tall gentleman had called, and being informed that Miss Roberts was not in, but Mis' Cook was, had asked to see Mis' Cook.

Mitty, on being applied to, had almost as brief a statement to make. "He had asked if Miss Roberts were well, and said he was very sorry!"

That very evening after she went up to her own room (she had played backgammon with Harry till she nearly dropped asleep) she wrote a long letter to Miss Maria, and, in a postscript, begged her to say to Professor Wright how very sorry she was not to have seen him, and that she hoped he would be in X—— again.

One day, when spring had fairly come, when Harry, with a party up from the academy, had gone out sketching, and Helen, by the open window, was reading "Our Mutual Friend" to her sewing-girl, she was called down stairs to see a gentleman. "A gentleman? What sort of a gentleman, Bridget? Old or young?" said the little lady, smoothing her hair before the mirror.

"Oldish, miss."

"Not very, is he? Is it the same gentleman who came a few weeks ago, Bridget?" and the mirror showed a rosy cheek, which very much surprised the little lady smoothing her hair.

"Which one, miss?'

"Oh, never mind, if you don't remember. It's of no consequence, Bridget."

"Oh, miss, the one as left his card, and you was so sorry."

"Yes."

"Yes. 'Twas Sally as went to the door that time, miss."

"Very well, that will do."

But it was not the same gentleman; it was only Mr. Cropper, of the gold-headed cane, and the red face and bald head, returned from Europe. Miss Roberts did not seem particularly glad to see the old gentleman.

"I thought it right to call, Miss Roberts, though you are no longer under the special care of our firm. As Mr. Saxton's former ward, we feel—I may say I feel personally—an interest in your fortunes."

Miss Roberts could but thank him.

"That was part of my errand," said the lawyer, taking out his note-book and seeming to look at something which he had jotted down. "You will pardon me if, prompted by the interest I have referred to, I mention another thing. I have been somewhat surprised at the disposition you have made of some of your money."

"You mean the Bee-Line, sir," said Helen, quickly.

"Yes; I have been more surprised at the largeness of the amount invested in that company."

"I thought three hundred shares a moderate amount to take in such a large concern."

"But you have taken more than twice that amount."

"Oh, no, sir; you must be thinking of some one else. That is all I subscribed for. I have my papers here."

"Let me see your papers, if you please."

The old lawyer put on his glasses and read the papers carefully. "This is all you have? I have been looking at the books this morning, and your name is certainly down for eight hundred shares."

"Then there must be some mistake. I never heard of it before."

The lawyer took out his note-book again, jotted down a word, and put it in his pocket. The word was a short one—*trickery*. "You will allow me to ask, and you will consider this as strictly between ourselves, if you please, whether you made this disposition of your funds simply by your own desire, or acting on the advice of others?"

"By my uncle's urgent desire, and by the advice of one of your partners."

"Which advice (am I right?) was not at first given on this side of the question."

"You are right; yes, sir."

The lawyer took out his note-book once more and jotted down a word. The word this time was—*bribery*.

"One thing more. I have reason to believe that the Bee-Line railroad is not a safe investment. It is possible that I may be able to remove your funds in some way—to save you from probable loss. Do you authorize me to do so?"

Helen considered a moment. What would her uncle say? But this was her guardian's money, and this was his friend advising her.

"Yes, sir, I would like to have you do it, if you can."

After this interview, the Boffins and the Wilfers were not quite so entertaining, and Susy wanted some trimmings. "I'll go down town myself," said Helen. "The air is lovely; and, then, Mitty can get off her box for Sairy Jane. I know she doesn't want to go this morning."

The air was lovely. "March was a dying through soft days and sweet." There was a smell of coming pinks and roses in the wind. Down town the streets had blossomed out in spring bonnets. The shop-windows were gay with light dress-goods, and ribbons, and flowers. Helen took a feminine pleasure in shoppings; that is, in her own little dainty shoppings. Mitty always bought the uninteresting things—sheets and pillow-cases, and substantials generally. But to-day, for the first time in her life, perhaps, she hesitated between the higher and lower priced articles, and decided on the latter. This fringe was just as pretty as thread lace, and in thirty yards it did make some difference whether one paid a dollar and a half or half a dollar a yard. She wouldn't be extravagant. She wondered if Mr. Cropper was right about that company.

As she came out past the dress-goods counter, a comical sight met her eyes. Attracted by the mildness of the day, Mrs. Converse had put on her finest attire, and sailed out of the quiet precincts of Shady street. She wore her purple and black brocade silk, which, being originally made with a train, she had gathered up, by a method of her own invention, over a black satin quilted petticoat of ancient date. Over her shoulders was a black velvet mantilla, trimmed with fringe half a yard deep. Her bonnet was a composite of several styles and colors, pink satin being the prevailing element, and a long white lace veil, embroidered by her own fair fingers, floated airily behind her. On her hands she wore black silk mits, and from one arm hung a large bag done in bead-work. She looked as if she had stepped out of a fashion-plate of thirty years ago.

As Helen passed, this lady was bending with the air of a *connoisseur* over an elegant piece of lavender poplin, and was deeply engaged in conversation with the amused-looking head-clerk, to whom she had sent her card on entering the store. Mrs. Converse enjoyed these shopping expeditions immensely. This was by no means the first since Susy had gone into the dress-making business. For Susy, in the largeness of her heart, had never thought of any thing but a common purse, and if there was one thing which Mrs. Converse could do with energy and success, it was spending money. But hitherto the lady's purchases had been chiefly for herself, and somewhat more modest than those which she contemplated this morning. To be sure, Susy had stood aghast more than once at the large supplies of pink ribbons and showy delaines for morning-dresses, and at a corresponding lowness of the funds, but mother must have her pleasures: what was a little money? This morning Susy's virtues were to be rewarded. "She is a good child, though she has—I must confess it, with regret—many of her father's peculiarities. But she does not do herself justice—It is highly important that she should make the most of what attractions she does possess. I intend that henceforth she shall dress in a manner becoming her position—I may say, in a manner, becoming her mother." With this in view, Mrs. Converse had sought the elegant establishment of Haberdasher & Co., and sent her card to Mr. Williams, the head-clerk, and with this in view she now bent over the lavender poplin and conferred with the same head-clerk. "What do *you* think, Mr. Williams? I should place great confidence in *your* opinion. It is not too delicate for her complexion, you think? Oh, Susy has not her mother's complexion. It has been a trial to me that Susy is so unlike me in that particular."

Mr. Williams, who was of an observing turn of mind, and knew very well who it was that got up at five o'clock every morning and brushed out the front hall and the pavement, and trotted out to the wood-shed (or had done so, till a certain young gentleman lodger in the house had discovered that his constitution required the exercise of splitting a little wood every night, and piling it up at the kitchen door), and made a fire, and got breakfast, and went to market before she set out for her day's work. Mr. Williams, meditating within himself on these things, considered that there were some other particulars, besides complexion, in which Miss Converse was unlike her mother.

"Do you think, Mr. Williams, that it would become her? Would you like to see her in it?"

Mr. Williams thought he could say with truth that he would like to see her in it.

"I am inclined to agree with you, Mr. Williams. I think I will have it. Yes, fourteen yards, if you please."

Mr. Williams handed the goods to an under-clerk to cut off, first pinning to it a bit of paper on which was written "20 yds." He was a sensible young man, and knew very well that fourteen yards of poplin would never make a lady's dress in these days.

"And now, Mr. Williams, green silk, if you please. I would like to look at green silks."

The head-clerk tossed down a heavy pile of white-covered parcels, and the counter was soon robed in vivid green. Mrs. Converse selected the most delicate shade, and (by the way) the most expensive piece. But, feeling a vague premonition that the money in her pocket might not hold out to the extent of a lavender poplin and a green silk, at the same time, she suggested that the latter should be sent up, if Mr. Williams were perfectly willing, for her daughter to look at at home. It might be that she would have some choice in shades. And this matter being satisfactorily arranged, Mrs. Converse paid her bill, had money enough left to buy herself a showy cotton lace collar, and returned in a state of great mental elevation to the retirement of Shady street.

The poor little lady spent hours in considering how she could most elegantly make the presentation to Susy. She contemplated with animation Susy's delight in the reception of the gift, and had a thought of inviting Miss Hurlburt and

Mr. Williams to be present at the ceremony. But she was doomed to cruel disappointment.

Susy viewed the elegant goods in blank dismay. "Mother!" she exclaimed, when at last she found her voice, "how could you?—where did you get the money?"

"Money, child," cried Mrs. Converse, "you know I am always ready to spend to the last farthing for my children. You know I can sacrifice any thing for you, and I must say, Susan, I must say, this is not the return I expected." And the poor little lady assumed a melo-dramatic air that was truly dreadful. "When I was young —ah!—when I was young"—and the large handkerchief with the deep lace border was not large enough now for the tears that rained upon it, "when I lived in luxury and affluence, *my* mother used sometimes to contrive some little surprise like this for her daughters. It was one of my greatest pleasures to receive a gift thus chosen for me by my *mother*."

"But, mother," cried out Susy, filled with bitter compunctions, and yet feeling it an absolute necessity to establish her point, "mother, don't you see the case is different. I *do* thank you for thinking of me, and choosing these dresses so carefully for me. But we are poor; we can't afford to dress in this way."

"Susan—I am astonished at you; you speak so coarsely. Ah, there is certainly very little of your mother in you, as Mr. Williams intimated to me this morning. But even he, I think, though he is a very observing young man, a *very* observing young man, even he would hardly have expected this. Ah, well—ah, well—I never realized before how "sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child."

Susy kept silence. She was a soft-hearted girl and a good daughter, but she could not take injustice meekly, without a good deal of a struggle. She folded up the elegant silk and poplin with a heavy heart, while her mother dropped off into a series of gentle sobs. Then she quietly made the tea and set the table. Her mother's face was still buried in the large handkerchief when she was done. Susy sat down on a low cricket and looked at her.

"It was her love that made her do it," she thought. "I ought not to be ungrateful. I am *not*. I love her for it. But I was harsh. I was sudden. I always am. I never shall be done shocking her, I'm afraid. But I can try."

She jumped up and ran to her mother's side. "Mother, tea's ready. And please don't think me ungrateful," and she dropped on her knee before the little lady.

Mrs. Converse kissed her, injured innocence sitting complacent on her countenance, and partook of her tea in perfect silence. In the course of the evening, Susy managed to introduce the subject again, and, at length, learned the real state of things in regard to the green silk. This was a relief; but when she looked into the purse after her mother had gone to bed, and took out the shining poplin and thoughtfully hung its rich folds over the little red-covered table, her heart sank down again.

"I never can wear that. I should be perfectly ashamed of myself, and it would ruin me as a sewing-girl. Besides, it isn't suitable for a walking-dress. It would fade in a week. And I did so need a neat spring walking-dress. I don't see how I can get along without one."

The next morning, with the green silk under her arm, Susy stepped into Haberdasher's on her way to the avenue, hoping — she didn't know why; she was sure it was nothing to her — that their lodger, Mr. Williams, had not yet arrived.

But the head-clerk was in his place, and by a dexterous flank movement put himself ahead of the other young man, who was advancing toward Susy, and met her with a smile. He was not precisely amused-looking this morning, the smile notwithstanding. With many blushes — it was an awkward business, to be sure — she explained that she did not wish to keep the silk.

"Oh, yes, certainly. Only I am sorry you should have brought it back yourself. I understood from your mother that it was quite doubtful about your taking it, but she admired the shade, and wished you to see it. Perhaps some other time there will be something."

"Now, wasn't that kindly done?" said the bright-eyed young woman to herself as she hurried away. But the poplin weighed on her mind all day and the next day. What should she do for a spring suit? If she could only get rid of the elegant dress. An idea came to her, but she disliked to entertain it even for a moment. Miss Roberts had spoken of getting another lavender dress, and she always bought heavy dresses — she was especially fond of poplin. If *she* would take it off her hands!

Helen did not notice the care on Susy's face the first day. "The Decline and Fall off the Rooshan Empire" was occupying her mind too much; but the next day after dinner, coming up from three very merry games of backgammon with Harry, and opening the door into the blue-room, she caught all in one glance.

"What are you thinking of Susy? I'm afraid those ruffles are lying heavy on your conscience. I call Mitty to witness that it was all your own doings. But I shan't allow myself to be so beflounced and befurbelowed again, if this is the effect it has on you."

Susy smiled, and shook her head. And when Mitty had gone out the girls' eyes met again. Helen did not renew her question, but it was in her face still.

"I wasn't thinking about the ruffles," said Susy, uneasily. "I believe I was thinking whether you had decided to get that lavender dress you were speaking of. Of course, it is nothing to me — I mean, it is none of my business, only I happen to have one on hand — there! — don't suppose I'm a Jew, and keep a second-hand shop —" and Susy stopped, more confused than she had been in the morning about the green silk, and devoutly wishing she had not said a word.

Helen was bewildered but kind, and respectfully awaited the continuation of the tale; and, suddenly growing as cool as possible, Susy lifted up her head and told the whole story. Helen saw through it at once. She was growing quick at seeing through other people's troubles, and she felt pretty well acquainted with Mrs. Converse.

"Thank you, Susy. I'm glad you told me. But would your mother like to have you sell that dress? I hadn't quite decided about the lavender. I will think it over, and you think it over, too, please, and we will talk about it again."

The next day Susy was at home, making one of the delaine morning-dresses for her mother. Mrs. Converse sat in state by the window, with a piece of gay crotchet-work in her lap. The morning was going a little dismally, and both mother and daughter felt something like a flash of sunshine when Miss Roberts' carriage came up to the door, and Helen, in a gray, silvery silk and a jaunty black hat with a white gull's breast, came towards the house. The clear, true voice and smile that she brought in with her, were still more like sunshine.

"How many yards of that muslin did you tell me to get, Susy? I wasn't quite sure, and thought I had better come around and ask you."

Susy told her, but she seemed in no hurry to go. She sat and chatted about the fine weather, the rapid growth of X——, a little about the spring styles.

"I am going to appeal to Miss Roberts, daughter, on the subject just now under discussion between us. I am sure Miss Roberts will agree with me," and Mrs. Converse, always gracious to Helen, and delighted to show her recent elegant purchase, brought out the lavender poplin. Then followed another version of Susy's story. This was just what Helen wanted.

"I see perfectly well now. It would break her heart to have Susy sell it. Peter, stop at Haberdasher's!"

When Susy came to sew one day early in the next week, there was a pretty light-brown dress to be made. "To be made in a suit?" asked the dressmaker, in business fashion.

"Yes; and make it as pretty as you please. You know some pretty, simple style. I shall leave it a good deal to you, for Rufus, and Harry, and I, are going to ride this morning. You cut the gray one by your own pattern, I believe you said. That fits well. Do this in the same way. I'll be home before it is time to hang the skirt."

Susy went to work in her usual brisk way. She liked the dress so much. She was not surprised at the color, for Helen had never worn regular mourning. Black and gray in the winter—light shades of gray and lavender this spring, with a blue ribbon whenever she felt like it. Aunt Matilda had considered it scandalous, but Helen knew her guardian's dislike of mourning apparel, and would not disrespect his opinions in doinghonor to his memory.

In the afternoon Helen lay on her bed with a volume of poems in her hand, and her eyes out in the tops of the larch trees, when Susy tapped at the door.

"I'm ready to hang the skirt now. Have I disturbed you?"

"No, I guess not."

She sat up on the bed, drew her little white wrapper around her, and her eyes seemed to shine more than ever, Susy thought.

"Isn't it pretty?" said the dressmaker, holding the dress at arm's length. "Do you like it?"

"Yes; it makes-up beautifully. And it's such a *brown* brown. Some browns are yellow, and some are red. It isn't often you find one so light as this, certainly, that is so pure."

"Well, Susy, I don't feel like getting up to have it measured. You'll have to measure yourself, I guess. The fact is—Susy Converse, come here, and sit down on this bed a minute. Now, please don't be a naughty girl, and be proud about this—I have hesitated a good deal. I was almost afraid of you. I know you are a proud girl, and so should I be in your place. But I wanted to, and I thought you would let me. Why, you see it's all perfectly simple and natural. Here we are, two girls, about the same age, equally well-educated (for, though you have been the quietest mouse in the world since you first came into this house, I haven't failed to see that you have had quite as solid an education as I have, and are as well read, except, perhaps, in French and German); our tastes are much the same, and I think we like one another. There are only a few little differences. You have some good things that I have not, and I happen to have—no, it isn't happening—I have given to me to keep—a little more of one very convenient thing than you have. Now, are you going to be naughty, and not let me make over to you a little of my extra share that rightfully belongs to you?"

Miss Roberts' cheeks were very rosy, and her eyes were very bright. This was a very long speech for her reserved and quiet self. She had been dreading that tap at her door all the afternoon. She had thought strongly of shirking. She had gone to her desk once to write a note. Notes were a great deal more graceful and easy than speeches. Whatever she thought of her effort now, it certainly went to the point.

Susy looked up, and her face told plainly now the story she had not dared to let it tell that morning when she first saw Helen. Neither of the girls knew exactly what was said next, but in two minutes they were laughing heartily together.

"But I don't know what to do next," Susy said, at last, starting up. "Do give me something to do. You've taken my occupation away."

"Go and finish the dress, and take it home all done. And you must keep the lavender, Susy, and make it up and wear it sometimes for your mother's sake." It seemed a great thing to Helen to have a mother to do anything for.

It was only a few weeks after this that Mr.

Cropper called again. He need not have come to tell the news, for Helen had just that moment (sitting by the broad, open window of her elegant breakfast-room, while Harry played croquet solitaire on the lawn) read it in the morning paper. The Bee-Line bubble had burst. "Our respected fellow-citizen, Roger Wood and many others were deeply involved in the ruin."

Helen took the paper to the library, and pointed to the paragraph as she shook the lawyer's hand. She was a little pale and frightened, it must be confessed.

The lawyer kindly allowed no long suspense. "Your uncle has declared himself a bankrupt, and you have lost very heavily. It is impossible to say just how much to-day. I had papers drawn up for a suit against Wood & Co. (the firm of Cropper & Co. had been changed during the last few weeks, by the way, and was now minus the junior partner's name), but, of course, it is too late now. We could get nothing out of them."

Failed! Helen had visions of a log-cabin on a boundless prairie, and wondered if there would be anybody to rescue her grand piano and a favorite cup and saucer from the hands of the cruel auctioneer. Yet, as she considered presently, and as the kind-hearted, red-faced lawyer assured her, there were still the H. F. and E. bonds, as good as gold, and there was her own original property, and there was her valuable house.

"Quite enough to meet the reasonable expenses of a moderate family, to say nothing of one young lady," said the bachelor, with rather a sharp look.

Enough for Harry—enough to fulfill the sacred promise made that February evening, thought the young lady, with thankfulness. The next thought was of Uncle Roger's family.

As soon as Mr. Cropper had gone and Harry was at work in his studio, she put on her hat and started for their house. She did not care to have the carriage this morning, and it was not far. She was a little surprised to find the house looking so much as usual as she came up the serpentine walk, but, within, things were more suitable to her ideas of a bankrupt family. The maid at the door had evidently been crying, and there was the sound of men's voices from the little front reception-room, which, for the first time in her remembrance, had the door shut.

Helen was going directly up-stairs to Aunt Matilda, but her uncle came out of this room and met her. He looked haggard and old, and Helen felt her heart grow soft toward him.

"Good morning, my dear. I am sorry I made that mistake for you."

"Oh, Uncle Roger, never mind me"—and she spoke in the honesty of her heart—"I am very sorry for you."

She laid her little hand in his, and was glad that the question of that suit had come no nearer. He was her mother's brother. The strong man seemed touched, and bent and kissed the little hand.

"Have you any plans, Uncle Roger?"

"Yes; my brother-in-law in Chicago has a place for me. I shall go out immediately, and begin again,—at the foot of the ladder."

Up-stairs, Aunt Matilda, bewildered and *distrait,* sat before her empty fire-place (it was the first of June) with her feet on the fender. She had forgotten to put on her back hair, and held tightly in her hand an old broken cologne-bottle without contents or cork. She seemed to be affected much as people sometimes are at a fire. Lily, pale and utterly listless, lay on the lounge in her own room. Dora, brought home by telegram last night, rushed in from the unpacking of her trunk, "hugely" delighted to see her cousin, embracing her heartily, and plunging at once into a flood of Oxford talk.

"You *are* the most unfeeling creature, Dora," groaned Lily, from the lounge.

"No, I'm not unfeeling either. I'm awfully sorry for father, and I know we shall all miss the money; but I declare it will give us all a jolly shaking up, and that's what we need, and get us out of this stupid X——. And I can teach school. I'm going to. They give famous salaries out West, and you and mother shall live like queens."

Helen felt a wish to have Dora at Miss Prescott's longer. She pondered her own exchequer and wondered if she couldn't manage it, and wondered what Miss Maria would say, and wished she could see her. How would it do to run up to Oxford for a day? But this was unnecessary; for the next day (being Saturday) who should drop down, by the early train, but Miss Maria's very self! Was ever little lady so welcome? Was ever little lady so glad to come? so cordial? so interested in everything?—in

Harry, with whom she played five games of croquet, in her "dear children," Helen and Dora.

Helen had Dora to dinner, having previously had a private talk with Miss Maria about her.

"That's just what I came for, my dear, to see if it seemed best, and tell her to come back if it did seem best. But, after seeing them all, I rather think she had better go. It will be worth more to her. They need her."

In two weeks they were all off, and a brand-new family from Water street, never heard of on the avenue, sending their brand-new furniture past Helen's windows into the house. There was time now for Helen to look into her own affairs, and with the help of the kindly, red-faced lawyer, she soon knew just how she stood with the world. There *was* a difference, to be sure, between the thousands which used to come in and the hundreds which came in now. There was need of economy. There must be retrenchment somewhere. But where to begin? Helen thought of everything. Dress? She had all her dresses for the season already. Table? Servants? While Mitty reigned, there could be few changes here. She tried it, though.

"Mitty, how do you think we could get along without Sally? She does n't do much. It seems to me she is n't an absolute necessity."

"Who would do up the breakfast things?"

"*I* would; I'd like to."

Mitty smiled an unbelieving smile.

"Might like it a day or two, perhaps. And who would go to the door?"

"Bridget. She could do it perfectly well."

"And do the clear-starching and the fine-ironing?"

"The laundress who does the other washing."

At length Mitty consented, and Sally went with a capital "character," and the breakfast things were washed every morning by fair, little hands that were none the worse for the exercise.

But this was only a trifle. What else? Susy? She might have her less frequently. But the money was of so much use to Susy. But other people's money was just as good. There was Mrs. Solomon Jones. She was groaning the last time she called over the general inability and want of moral character of the X—— dressmakers, and wishing they could import a few who would keep their engagements.

Mrs. Solomon Jones had a note shortly from Miss Roberts on the subject of dressmakers, and was soon rejoicing in Susy Converse's deft and tidy workmanship.

But still this was not enough. Was there anything else? Helen had promised Harry a trip to the White Mountains this summer. It would be a grievous trial to her to break that promise. She sat down, guide-book, pencil, and paper in hand and figured the whole thing up. The first result was to give up going herself. There were the Mitchell's—the nicest of people—and one of the young ladies was Harry's class-mate at the academy. They were going; he could go with them, and would enjoy it. The second result was another period of deep thinking. Was there another retrenchable place? The question was not settled when the dinner-bell rang. It renewed itself as Harry talked with animation of his coming pleasure. He should not be disappointed in a single particular. He should have all the pleasure he could out of it. In the evening, after tea, Miss Roberts was called into the kitchen. Dennis stood, hat in hand, awkwardly viewing the ceiling. He had a brother going to California. He was thinking of going, too. He had no objections to the place. He was sorry to leave. He had always been treated handsomely by Mr.

Saxton and by the young mistress, but they said "he could do better."

"I am sorry to lose you, Dennis. You have been very faithful," said the young lady, feeling very old and matronly, indeed. "But if you can better yourself, you must go, I suppose."

But what was to become of the flowers? A household of women could never see to them, Peter never would. She could n't give up her flowers. So the problem went on increasing, and the answers did not always come at once. If it were not for Mitty—but Mr. Saxton had expressly desired that she should remain, so long as she pleased at the housekeeper's post.

One day (it was while Harry was gone to the mountains), Mitty, in pursuance of her housekeeping duties, was superintending the washing of the library windows. She stood by one of them just as the post-man came up the steps with a letter in his hand, and she went to the door to take it. At the same instant a boy came up the steps with a telegram. The telegram was for Mitty herself, and ran as follows: "Sairy Jane has had a fall. Laid up. Come. J. Sampson."

Poor Mitty had never received a telegram before. That of itself was enough to frighten her.

Then the news. She sat down on the stairs, as white as her folded lace, and the girls at last got her to her room. She still held the two letters, her own ill-boding yellow one, and the other which was directed to Miss Roberts, and when she reached her room, she laid them both carefully away in the "Scott's Commentary" on the table. Miss Roberts came home in a few minutes, and up to the house-keeper's room. Mitty sat on the bed weeping—all her personal property, bonnets, dresses, caps, under-clothing spread about her. "I don't know what to do no more than the man in the moon," she groaned.

"Oh, yes, you do. Where's a morning paper? Your train goes at 12.50. Bridget, you ask Ann to have a good lunch and a cup of tea ready at twelve, and order the carriage. Mitty, you just lie down and rest. I'll pack the trunk."

Mitty allowed herself to be treated like a child, and by twelve o'clock the work was done. When lunch was ready, she was surprised to see Helen come down with hat and gloves on.

"You ain't a goin' too?"

"Yes, I am, Mitty. There's a junction that might trouble you, as you've never gone this way alone. I shall be home to tea, Bridget."

"Well, I never thought! What a woman she has grown." . . . . .

That same week of summer—one sunny afternoon — Professor Wright, sitting by his study window, had been turning over the leaves of his Greek Testament, and now looked off over the peaceful fields to the Rockshire hills. At length, pushing aside the book, he drew paper and pen toward him and wrote a short letter as follows:

"MY DEAR MISS ROBERTS,—It was a disappointment to me not to see you when I called at your house a few weeks since, and lest I may suffer the same ill-fortune another time, I think it well to inform you that I am going to try again. If I hear from you that you are to be at home next Thursday or Friday, I shall probably call on one of those days. If you are not to be at home, or, if for any reason, it will not be convenient or agreeable to you to see me, do not trouble yourself to write.

"The summer is in Oxford again, making it the prettiest place in the world. The hills, as I write, are looking precisely as they did that afternoon, now more than a year ago, when you and Miss Haas honored my study with a visit.

"Yours, sincerely, JOHN WRIGHT."

This was the letter that came at the same time with Mitty's telegram. Two years afterwards Helen found it in the house-keeper's room, carefully laid away in "Scott's Commentary."

" For as his hand the weather steers,
So thrive I best 'twixt joys and tears,
And all the year have some green ears."

CHAPTER XI.

MORE than a year of the new order of things had passed away. There had been some difficulties, many perplexities, many givings up. But, after all, things had settled down and smoothed out into a very peaceful, pleasant life. There had been no going down to Siloam that first summer — not even for a day. But Harry had had his mountains, and Miss Roberts had done more sewing than she had ever done in her life before. With Susy now and then to "start" a piece of work and brighten up the day, Helen thought she was getting on famously, and would be a capital seamstress one of these days.

After Mitty had been gone for a few weeks there came a letter in an orange-colored envelope to this effect:

"MISS ROBERTS — RESPECTED MISS, — Mrs. Cook desires me to state that she would of wrote before this, had it not ben for a bad finger (Mitty had never, to Helen's knowledge, written a letter in her life). She is in good health at present, and had a safe journey from the junction. My wife is still lade up.

"Yours, with respect, J. SAMPSON.

"P. S. Mrs. Cook desires me to state that she likes very well, and as my wife is feable, she would like to remain for the present if you can get along without her."

This was satisfactory. Mitty received instructions to stay as long as she pleased, and changes that could not have taken place under her administration, were now speedily made. The house service was reduced to cook and waitress. The little mistress taught her white fingers many new lessons. Not only were the breakfast things washed up on the table, but a capacity for occasional pies and puddings was developed. Miss Roberts adopted the house-keeper's keys, and inspected the kitchen and pantries with a very wise face. All this took time. Between the daily lessons to Harry, and the practice, and the unwonted amount of sewing, and the French and German readings which she tried to keep up, every moment was busy. But the little lady thrived, nevertheless, and rather liked it. Pretty, domestic, womanly ways came upon her. She sang about the house more than she had ever been known to do before. Still, as we have said, there were some hard times. There were puzzling questions. It was the harder, because nobody knew of her losses.

The subscription papers came around as they had done in the days of her wealth and greatness. The young minister still brought his charities and laid them at her feet. Mr. Saxton's old ladies, whom she had tried not to lose sight of, still lived, and seemed to multiply. She had often to choose between two courses which seemed equally her duty. She had to let some calls go by unheeded. She had to ponder long sometimes before devising any method of doing what she felt she must do. By a singular coincidence sometimes, a pair of bracelets or a breast-pin would disappear from her bureau-drawer, and the same day Bridget go off heavily laden with a basket for old Mrs. Brown. Harry's expenses increased. Books, artist's materials, clothing, instruction, were costly things. The flowers? they had been taken care of in a wonderful way. Dennis' place had remained unfilled for weeks. Things took care of themselves as well as they could.

One day old Mr. Smith, the Scotch florist, came over to see some plant he had given Dennis. It seemed a pity to have that green-house left without a keeper. Could she na find a mon for Dennis' place. He humbly begged her pardon, but what would she think of this? He needed more room. If she would na be offended, might his boy Jeems have the care of her garden and green-house, and find a place on the shelves for some of his plants? There was room enough. He did not care for the flowers, he only wanted a growing-place. She was welcome to the *bloom.*

Miss Roberts opened her padlocked book the night after this had happened. I do not know exactly what she wrote in it, but she felt very much like the old German minister who prayed, "Oh, Lord, when I try to do a little thing for Thee, and give up something near to my heart, Thou comest and givest me back a thousand times as much — and I feel so humble and ashamed before Thee."

So the green-house went on flourishing, and bloom was not wanting in the two hundred and fifty rose plants that were shortly packed away on the shelves. As for Peter, he seemed a necessity, but the horses were reduced to Rufus and the two blacks, and the carriages to a phaeton and the closed winter coach.

News from Chicago was encouraging. Dora was at the head of a flourishing school in a town not far from home. Uncle Roger was secretary of some insurance company at a good salary. They had hired a furnished house, and were living comfortably. Lily had become engaged to a well-to-do business man, and was to be married soon. Helen thought her grown prettier than ever, when, according to an urgent invitation, she shut up her house, took Harry, and went out for a two months' visit, which was to include the wedding. A busy and a merry visit it was. There were so many things to be done. All the new arts Helen's fingers had learned came into requisition here.

Aunt Matilda did not take to domestic life on a small scale. Lily had been house-keeper and manager-general, and, besides growing pretty, had grown womanly and thoughtful. The girls spent many a sunny winter morning together cutting, planning, sewing, and wisely conferring on housekeeping present and future.

One morning, Helen was busy on an infinite series of little satin loops for the wedding-dress, left by the dress-maker to be finished, when Lily came up behind her, and lovingly pinched her cheek.

"You're a jewel, dear. And who would have thought of your doing these things! You used to hate so to do 'fussy' things."

"I told you I had been taking lessons in the ornamental branches."

"Wasn't that funny? But, do you know, Helen Roberts, you're a great deal nicer girl than you used to be — more like other people. Mother and I were talking about it last night."

Helen laughed a quick, little laugh, and threw the wedding-veil over Lily's head, but the pleased color that came to her cheek was almost as deep as Lily's under the white veil.

And during this visit she had an opportunity to say a word to Lily, that she had long had on her heart. Lily had come up late from a visit with her Henry, and, after a succession of very creaky tiptoeings about the room while divesting herself of her clothes, crept as noiselessly as possible into bed, to find Helen wide-awake in the starlight. At this the two girls, as is the manner of girls, fell into a hearty laugh, and afterwards into deep discourse. They grew confidential as the stars looked in upon them. Lily spoke of her Henry in glowing words, and Helen did her best to be sympathetic.

"And he's so good, too," said Lily, with a little sigh. "A great deal better than I am. He was saying to-night how we ought to be better now, we love each other so, and how we must help each other. I'm afraid I sha'n't help him much."

"Not help him, Lily? Why, you must. Why, if I loved a good man and he loved me, and was going to marry me, why, Lily, I should want to be so pure — I should want every word and thought to be so good and true — I should fear so to be a hindrance to his goodness," and Helen stopped, looking out with solemn eyes upon the stars. She had spoken very solemnly. It seemed a very great thing to her.

"Helen!" said Lily, quickly, and she bent over and tried to look down into her eyes. But she only kissed her and drew her closer. And then their voices dropped lower, and Helen said, a little tremulously at first, the words she knew she ought to say; perhaps they might be used and blessed.

While Helen was in Chicago, she received a long letter from Miss Hurlburt with some ill-spelling and grammar in it, but with a certain charming ring of her active, cheery life, and telling all the news in her friendly, gossippy way, and chiefly about Susy. Susy had waked one morning and found herself very lonely in her little house. Poor Mrs. Converse's wants and troubles were over. Mr. Williams came to the door with a basket of white cut flowers, and a very kind face. Miss Hurlburt took the lonely child right to her heart, and in a few days to her home. Susy now had the third story front of the little house where Miss Hurlburt with her clock and her kittens had lived so long. She still sewed for Mrs. Solomon Jones and a few others, and was looking out, though not anxiously, for whatever more congenial work might come to her.

On her way home, at Niagara Falls, after she had left the bridal party, whom should Helen meet but Professor Wright, and ride with him nearly all day! He was as good as ever, and very kind to Harry, but in some strange way, it was impossible for Helen to tell how or where, very much changed. Was he graver? He was always grave. Was he less kind? He had never before given her so distinct an impression of his kindness. She could not tell what it was. She wondered a little about his engagement. Was it not time for those people to be married? But she had heard Miss Haas remark that she believed in long engagements.

During this summer there was a visit from Miss Maria, refreshing and brightening beyond expression. Harry had never laughed so much before. Helen had never sung so much over her household cares. The long days together were delicious. They talked over everything, almost. Helen had a thought of asking about that long engagement, but somehow she did not. The evening before Miss Maria went, however, it did occur to her to ask another question.

"Miss Maria, did you ever tell Professor Wright how sorry I was to lose that call?"

"Oh, yes, dear, and he said he must try again."

All these things having happened, it is now nearing Christmas of the second winter since Mitty's departure. Miss Roberts sits in her library. She wears a morning dress of some soft, light-grayish tint, and has a spray of ivy twined in her hair; for, notwithstanding all the economies, she has not lost a certain trick of dainty dressing.

It is snowing without, but there is a bright fire here, and Harry, with fun in his eye, is reading "Martin Chuzzlewit." Miss Roberts has just had an idea, and her face is bright with it. She goes to her secretary, takes out paper and pencil, and does a deal of arithmetic. She substracts a silk dress from a winter outfit. She adds up a column something like this: Fare to city, hotel, tickets, sundries, and multiplies by six. She then subtracts an Astrachan cloak from the winter outfit. "I'll do it. I'll give myself a treat. I don't need that cloak and dress. The old ones are pretty enough," she says, and, catching Harry's attention she asks, "Shall we go to the city and spend the holidays with Miss Maria and some other nice people?"

Harry is delighted as, to say the truth, he generally is with Miss Roberts' suggestions. "He can't enjoy the Oratorios, but there are lots of other things. He has never had enough of the city," the lady considers, and proceeds to write a letter.

"DEAR MISS PRESCOTT,—I am getting very

home-sick for Oxford, and I am writing to beg you to give me a little piece of it for a few days. I want you all to come down and spend the holidays with me—you and Miss Maria, Mrs. and Miss Haas, and Professor Wright, if he will come. There is to be a week of Oratorios in the city you know, and my programme includes that, or as much of it as any of you care for. I am sure you cannot deny me, one of you. Will you be so kind as to ask the professor for me, and urge it more, perhaps, than I should dare.

"Your always grateful

"HELEN ROBERTS."

They did not deny her—one of them. Professor Wright did not give his answer at once, but, thinking it over in his room, the gracious-hearted man smiled gravely to himself. "She does not forget her old teacher. She would like to see him with the rest. It is a kindly thought. And it will be a pleasure to me. I don't know that I should deny it to myself." And the young lady, when she received the answer, thought, "How glad I am! I thought he would come with Mrs. and Miss Haas. We shall have one of the nice old times."

The house was beautiful that Christmas-eve. Harry and the faithful Jeems had hung the evergreen wreaths with great taste, and set the orange trees and the large flowering azalias in the bay-windows. The folding doors were open and the spacious rooms thrown together. The grates gave forth a soft, ruddy glow, and the twilight was just falling, when they all came. It was the pleasantest of evenings. They say the professor had not forgotten to put the "Four-part Songs" into his little black bag. Miss Haas played on the grand piano, Mrs. Haas chattered and was charmed with every thing, and Miss Prescott, with the little slate, made Harry's acquaintance in a corner. Miss Hurlburt, trotting up the avenue on some mysterious Christmas-eve errand, and having it in her heart to step in and speak to Helen, looked in through the broad windows on the cheerful scene, and trotted off again with a pleased face. The Rev. Mr. Parley, on the contrary, walking out under the frosty heavens and coming opposite the brightly-lighted house, was not thus affected. He crossed the street immediately, rang the bell, and soon made one of the party.

Helen was proud to introduce the professor, and watched the interview with interest, but, strangely enough, the two men did not get on at all. They sat and glowered at one another in a remarkable way, and heavy silences fell between them, which the ladies had to relieve as best they could. The professor would not show off in the least. He never had been so "poky." The minister, to do him justice, certainly did his best to be polite. He was profoundly respectful, and urged the professor to preach for him next Sabbath, and Helen adding a hearty intercession, the point was carried. The next morning there was a little basket of choice flowers at every body's plate, and after breakfast, in an informal way, a great exchanging of small paper parcels. In the course of the day Helen found on her secretary a volume of George Herbert, in black velvet and gold. On the fly-leaf were written her name and the date, in a hand which she recognized as one she had seen on her German exercises long ago.

This discovery had the effect of deciding her on a point till now unsettled, and in the evening there appeared in the professor's room a large volume of photographic views of Jerusalem, which had been tempting the eyes of all lovers of choice things for some weeks on a bookseller's counter. Perhaps it was nobody's business, if a coral pin and ear-rings, brought by Uncle Roger from Naples, was missing from Miss Roberts' drawer about this time. Perhaps, on the other hand, this same pin and ear-rings "might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor." Who shall undertake to prove the wisdom of a woman's gifts of gratitude.

This Christmas morning, after the paper parcels had been disposed of, was given to church, the afternoon to social pleasures. The professor stole about the soft-carpeted halls and parlors, and gazed at the pictures or dived into bookcases. Helen was afraid he was restless, but his old, kind, interested look and tone came back, if she crossed the room to speak to him. He was marvelously struck by the portraits, and took more interest in the histories belonging to them than Helen had ever done. The young hostess did not forget the engagement, and managed (with the active co-operation of Mrs. Haas) all sorts of little retreats and privacies for the lovers so that, owing to her thoughtfulness, there was a deal of mental and moral philosophizing done that week.

"Do you notice, Deborah," said Miss Maria, after the sisters had gone up to their room that night, "do you see how the child cleaves to that old, exploded theory? Would you tell her?"

"No, dear, I think I would not tell her now."

"What a dear child she has grown," continued the younger sister, unfastening her neck-ribbon, "How clear and happy her eyes look. She seems to have forgotten all about herself. It seems to me it's a wonderful growth: don't you think so?"

"I should think so, if I did n't believe this," said Miss Prescott, reading from her little hymn-book—

"But He by ways they have not known,
Will lead his own."

The next day was Sunday. Helen felt a wonderful sense of awe in riding to church in the same carriage with the sermon. Indeed, the calm of the Oxford Sundays seemed to have fallen on the whole party, and pervade the whole city. Helen fancied that the church seemed quieter, and that the spry young minister came in with a gentler tread than usual. The sermon was like the Oxford sermons of old, and the same solemn peace filled her heart when it was done.

Helen waited for her guest at the door of her pew. Both the gentlemen coming down the aisle, met her with a smile. One of them, at least, had admiration in his eye, and thought how pleasant a thing it would be to have a sweet and reverent face like that waiting for one every Sunday.

Monday was Mondayish. They were to go to the city in the afternoon, and they scattered rather aimlessly in the morning.

Helen was surprised, and not a little pleased, on coming in from a drive with the ladies, to find Miss Hurlburt and Professor Wright talking together in the friendliest way before her library fire. The professor had been spending his morning strolling about the city, and poking into the public library and museum, and Miss Hurlburt out on one of her collecting expeditions, and, thinking she would just drop in and ask Helen who that good man was that preached yesterday, found the good man himself on Miss Roberts' door-steps. This was too much for her. She could n't resist introducing herself and asking if he *would n't* stay and make a few remarks at the maternal meeting Thursday afternoon. Miss Hurlburt made a point of attending the maternal meetings herself. She saw no reason why it was not perfectly proper for Professor Wright to do so likewise. But being obliged to give up this desire of her heart, she fell back on "that passage in Romans" which had long exercised her mind, and begged that he would give her his views on the point. She sat now with her bonnet-strings untied, and the sun shining straight into her eyes. Her bright, old face was full of theology. Helen came in smiling, and drew down the shade before she took the chair the professor handed.

"How did you two people get together, I wonder."

"Your minister here is telling me what he thinks about that passage I was speaking to you of. I've been wanting to ask somebody for ever so long," said Miss Hurlburt, too much engrossed for particular explanation. "I like Mr. Parley's views, in general; but a body never can get hold of him—he's always in a hurry. And then about that other verse, sir—the thirteenth."

The professor, good-naturedly, expounded his opinion.

Miss Roberts, well pleased, stroked the feather on her hat, and waited for a chance to say a word.

"Now, Miss Hurlburt," she urged, when, at last, an opportunity offered, "you see your bonnet is inclined to stay (it was hanging by one string now), just take off your shawl, please, and stay to dinner with us and see all my friends."

"Oh, no, my dear, I must go this very minute. Here 't is dinner-time and I've only got fifteen dollars;" and with a hearty shake of the good professor's hand, and a very fervent "God bless you, child," in Helen's ear, she was off.

"That is a rare woman, I opine," said the professor, stepping towards Helen, and looking down upon the feather.

"Isn't she? I am so glad you found each other out. She is one of my great admirations."

Then there was a pause, and the tall man still looked down upon the feather. Perhaps he was thinking what a very foolish thing that stroking of it was.

"I was wondering if you have many of those? —those great admirations?" he said, when the silence had brought a pair of brown eyes up to his.

"No, sir, not many, I guess—not as many as I wish I had sometimes; but they're great, you know." She blushed a little. It seemed to her like rather a personal subject. But, to the simple-minded man the pyramids of Egypt would have been as much so. And just then the others came in and dinner was ready.

The afternoon took them to the city. There they found plenty to see and to hear. They went in full force to the first oratorios, even Harry begging that he might *see* the Hallelujah Chorus. By the third evening, most of the ladies were quite worn out. Even Miss Haas, who was wont to boast her Amazonian strength and superiority to fatigue, was quite under the weather with severe headache; and, talking the matter over at tea, it appeared that only Helen and Professor Wright were in condition and spirits to go. It was to be only a concert, to be sure, as Mrs. Hass urged in favor of a social evening at home, but then "there be concerts and concerts," as the professor urged, on the other side of the question. Helen felt a little sorry about it. She was afraid it would be dull. If Miss Maria only felt like going. But Miss Maria was bent on finishing her new book before she went to sleep. The professor certainly made the best of it. He went out before it was time to go, and brought soft, fragrant, blush-roses for his lady to wear. She put them in her hair and among the ribbons at her white throat. Somehow the evening was wonderfully pleasant. He did not seem to miss the others much.

The next day Miss Haas continued poorly. Helen sat by her all the morning, like a dutiful little hostess, till her invalid's dinner of broiled chicken and plum-pudding came up, and Mrs. Haas, just home from a matinée, took the nurse's place. After lunch, the party separated. Harry went with Miss Prescott and Miss Maria to see a friend in the suburbs.

"The professor is going up-town to call on an old acquaintance," said Mrs. Haas. "I shall stay with Theo. You had better lie down and rest, dear."

Not inclined for that particular method of resting, the young lady took her worsted-work and went into their little private parlor. To her surprise, Professor Wright soon came in. He appeared to be in no haste about going up-town, for he sat down by the fire and looked as if he were in for an afternoon of newspapers. Presently, glancing over at his *vis-à-vis*, he asked if he should read aloud.

There is nothing a man likes better than to read aloud to an intelligent woman whose fingers are busy with useful work of some kind. It is (" I speak as a man," and beg pardon of the strong-minded), the normal state of things. It is a work of supererogation to read to a man. Besides, a man has " views," and is n't apt to be a reverent hearer. A woman, however appreciative, is, by the law of her nature (I again beg pardon of the strong-minded, and make an exception in their favor), more likely to keep silence. If the reader feels that she takes it in, if she has a bright or a thoughtful thing to say when he is done, it is all he wants. Then the domestic side of her nature (that which is sweetest and best in man or woman), is in play, and gives an inexpressible sense of coziness—something perfectly unattainable between two men.

Helen was in a bright mood that afternoon, and had pleasant little things to say. Then she was young, and ignorant about some things, and asked questions. A man dearly likes to answer questions. The professor looked in his sweetest mood. When they were tired of the newspapers he looked out of the window and said something about the oratorio in the evening. Helen was unaffectedly sorry that Miss Haas should be again unable to go. "I'm afraid it is very stupid for him," she thought, and she added aloud, "I beg you won't feel obliged to go with me, Professor Wright, unless you really wish to go. I am very sorry our party has been so broken up. It would be too bad if we could help it."

"I do not consider myself an object of pity," said the professor, with a curious look in his eyes. Then throwing down his paper, he crossed the room, and sat down on the end of the sofa very near Helen's chair. Helen was sitting by the window that looked out on the street, working a bunch of pansies. The soft-colored silks and wools lay in her lap, and the flowers were growing fast under her white fingers. The professor watched her for a few minutes, and seemed interested in the work.

"I have a great mind to tell you a story," he said, at last.

The brown eyes looked up, all ready for the story, and presently he began.

"I knew a boy once—a poor boy. He lived with a poor man and woman up in a little backwood town in Maine. They were not his father and mother. He never knew his father and mother. They were poor people, too, and had died when he was a mere baby. But this rough man and woman, rather than see the child die, took him home and gave him of their rough fare. He learned nothing but the lumbering trade, and, till he was ten or twelve years old, thought of nothing else. Then, by some means, he got hold of a few books. His father, as he called the man he lived with, taught him a little of reading, and ignorantly enough he read. Then he heard of a night-school in a neighboring village. He went to it, and finally became its teacher. Well, it's a stupid story, I'm afraid you think—"

Helen looked up quickly, but did not speak, and the professor went on.

"He got an education, or what people call an education, somehow, but he has since learned that the best part of that education was the struggle to get it. Now, he is trying to make some use of what he has gained. He is not a rich man, and never will be. He has no portraits of his ancestors to hang in his hall. He has nothing to be proud of."

Helen was looking up again, her whole face shining with something that looked like pride and triumph. Just then the door opened.

"Ah, here you are, professor," said Mrs. Haas.

"Do you know I'm in such trouble about that poor child. Her head aches constantly, and her dinner does not seem to agree with her."

As the professor received this announcement in absolute silence, and an awkward pause ensued, Helen felt it incumbent on her to say something.

"I'm very sorry, Mrs. Haas. What can we do? Had she better see a physician?"

"Oh, no, dear. I hardly think so. I don't think it anything serious. But we are so unused to illness. Theo has always been *so* well, you know, professor. I think, my dear, if *you* would sit with her a little while, it would cheer her."

Helen's face flushed quickly. Impoliteness to her guests, or anything that looked like it, was very far from her heart. She began to gather up her wools, but before she went, she turned to Professor Wright. "I thank you for telling me that story," she said, in a low voice, and slowly. "I shall never forget it."

An hour or so after, she had braided her beautiful hair, and stood before the mirror fastening her collar. She was dressed simply, in a soft, black silk, and her velvet jacket, and white furs, and the hat with the long ostrich plume lay on the bed all ready for the evening. The plush rose-bud she had worn all day was too withered for further service, and an unaccountable feeling came over her which prevented her taking one of those she had kept fresh in a tumbler on the wash-stand. So it was her favorite Dresden pin, with her own particular little cherub on it, that nestled among the soft blue ribbons to-night. The face that met hers in the mirror was rather a serious one. Watching with dyspeptics is rather a serious business, to be sure, and Helen had felt tired and, somehow, wonderfully cheerless since entering her little room. Her bright mood had changed so quickly. As she turned away, she caught a glimpse of her figure in the glass, and all her nameless discomfort culminated in a sharp, sudden pain. She put her hands before her face and stood still, leaning on the bed before her. She *wished* she was n't lame. It was a hard, cruel, bitter agony. She had not felt it so since she was a little girl. It was so bad, that at last, she locked her door and fell down on her knees before the bed. She was still kneeling, though with a quieter face, when the dinner gong sounded through the house. Nobody noticed it if she was a little pale at dinner, and if she talked a little less than usual, it was fully made up by the lively Mr. Parley, who had happened down to the city on business, and when he saw the X—— party, rushed across the dining-hall and took Miss Haas' vacant seat by Helen's side. But the pain lingered dull in her heart, and did not go away till she was sitting, three hours afterwards, by the professor's side, listening to the blessed music. "For He is meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls," warbled the sweet singer. And rest, and peace, and comfort did come like a flood. Her companion was watching her face, and would not have spoken for the world. But when the strain had ceased, she turned to him, her face full of it and sighing, as we sometimes do, for very comfort.

"What is it?" he whispered, as he would have done to a child, bending over her to catch her answer. And like a child she answered.

"Oh, it is such a wonder that we don't always *stay* there — down there where it is so sweet and cool — that we always have to keep coming to get the rest and peace."

The professor did not speak, but he answered her look by one of his rarest and kindliest smiles, and drew his big, friendly arm a trifle closer. And the orchestra went on into the drums and thunder of the overture to the next part.

It was the last of their pleasures in the city. The next day Miss Haas was still ailing, the best of the music was over, the sights could easily be seen in the morning, and the idea of going home by the afternoon train commended itself to every body.

The doctor came to see Miss Haas, and reported nothing more serious than an aggravated case of Christmas dinner. She took to her bed, however, and kept it for two days. Helen noticed that a large stock of paper and the fountain pen were deposited under the sheets, and when her mother was out of the room the invalid scribbled vigorously.

Sitting by her side the day after they had come home, Helen had watched the signing, folding and enveloping process, and was astonished beyond measure when, that being finished, the patient leaped past her out of bed, rushed to the door, locked it, took the key, and holding the precious document aloft, addressed her in a tragic manner.

"You will never let the mother know? Promise me, Lenchen. I must ask you to do a favor for me, and you cannot do it till you have promised. Keep it from the little mother, I pray you."

Very much bewildered and somewhat alarmed, Helen first made earnest endeavors to get her patient back to bed, and failing in these, demanded a further explanation of the mystery.

"It is a letter to my Emil — my friend — betrothed! The professor must have it before tomorrow, or it cannot go by this week's mail. The mother is our deadly enemy. To her he is but a poor musician, but to me — he is my *betrothed*, my *prince* — '*mäunlich, edel, fürstlich!*' I have told you all now. I am in your power. You will not betray me?"

Feeling a good deal as if an earthquake had taken place, Helen made the required promise, put the thick letter in her pocket, and drew the coverings over this most remarkable young woman, who now clambered into bed with as much agility as she had just exercised in leaving it.

"Then you are not — I was taken by surprise — I had always supposed—" said Helen.

"The dear professor to be my betrothed," supplied Miss Haas. "Ah! that would be a great joy to the mother. But, no. He is my best of friends, and Emil's. If it had not been for him, I know not how I should have endured these weary years. I wished to remain in the fatherland with my Emil, but the good professor made it seem right to me to come with the mother. Emil works night and day for the home which he has promised me; and when a few more years have gone, or when the rich uncle dies to leave him an inheritance, he will come for me."

Somehow this spectacle of devoted love seemed remarkably beautiful to Helen.

"I wish him all success, and both of you all happiness," she said warmly.

"And if you will see that the professor has the letter in time?"

"Yes, I will go right away."

"And I will go to sleep," said the invalid.

Helen went through the long hall to the top of the stairs. The professor, it appeared, was traversing the lower hall, about to come up. By what principle it was that instead of going down stairs, she turned down the passage that led to the housekeeper's room, and there sat regarding the Scott's Commentaries, and rocking violently for about five minutes, the young lady did not attempt to explain.

"There is no hurry," she reflected. "The professor will pass the office when he goes out with Mr. Parley to the evening meeting, and we are safe enough from Mrs. Haas till she's home from that sleigh-ride an hour hence."

Nevertheless, after having smoothed her hair, and changed her neck-ribbon, and stepped into the kitchen to say a word about the muffins, she proceeded to the library. There was a pleasant scene. The professor and Harry, in a glow of fire-light and under the porcelain shade, were turning over school-books and talking briskly. The professor, whom, by the way, Harry regarded as a great usurper of his special rights and privileges, brought up a low chair for Helen, and made her one of the group. She handed him the letter at once. He took it with a queer smile, a little like that with which he began his story the other day, and with a questioning look down into her eyes, that made her turn them uneasily away. She looked toward Harry, wishing for a change of subject.

"Your pupil does you credit," said the professor, pleasantly, perhaps taking the hint. The eyes came back again, very pleased and child-like.

"I am glad you have been examining him a little. I have been wanting to ask some one about him. How is he on the Latin?"

"I think his knowledge of the language and his interest in it quite remarkable. You are going to give him Greek, he tells me."

"Yes, sir; his mother wished it. How soon ought he to begin with it?"

"In another year, I should think; after he has finished Horace."

"I am dreading it a little"—the familiar, child-look remained through all this comfortable little talk. "I don't like to give him up, but I know nothing of Greek, and if I take lessons myself, as I have thought of doing, I'm afraid the second-hand instructions will not be as good as he ought to have."

"I should have no fear of that. Have you thought of a teacher for yourself?" he added after a little.

"No, sir."

"May I come down and give you weekly lessons?" with an eagerness that was new to her in the quiet, grave man.

"Why, Professor Wright, how delightful!"

"They have been asking me to give a short course of lectures here next winter," he explained.

"If I might have my former German pupil in Greek, I think I would come."

The child-like eyes grew fuller of pleasure and pride. "For the lectures' sake, and for the Greek's sake, I hope you will come."

"You will consider it settled, then?" he asked, quickly, for the young minister, invited to tea, was now taking off his coat in the hall.

"It is a long time to keep a promise, perhaps, but will you promise not to take another teacher?"

"I will, indeed, sir, and I thank you very much," and she turned to meet her guest.

The continuation of Miss Haas' romance, began that afternoon in Helen's room, came sooner than anybody expected. In April of that new year, Miss Maria wrote as follows:

"You should have been here, dear child, through our recent excitements. You would have been as amused as we all have been. I will begin at the beginning. I was dusting the parlors one day, flying about near the windows, when a long-haired, light-haired, fair-faced little man coming up the walk, attracted my attention. He bore a violin-case under his arm, and, when I went to the door, inquired, in very broken English, for Miss Theodosia Haas.

"Miss Haas was passing through the hall at that moment, her mother, I regret to say, behind her. I spoke to the former, and the little man with the violin fell into her arms. This, then, was her German lover. Mrs. Haas followed, and when she saw the sight, shrieked aloud. We had scenes enough for half an hour. The young people fell at her feet and entreated her blessing, but she only shrieked the louder, and called wildly on 'the dear professor,' who, sad to say, was then at his lecture. I put her to bed and gave her paregoric. After dinner I sent up a note to the professor, who came down at once, looking quite equal to the occasion, and very pleased to see his old friend of the violin. Mrs. Haas sat up in state in her rocking-chair to receive him, and I let them have a long session together. What passed in the little back sitting-room nobody knows. I think the fact that the rich uncle had died and Emil had come into his property, which I administered with the paregoric, had some effect. But whatever it was, in about an hour 'the mother' walked out, leaning on the professor's arm, addressed the penitent lover in a dramatic manner, and embraced the little man violin and all.

"After this, all went merrily. You should have seen the lover. His face is music and poetry. He plays magnificently, and clasps his precious violin and looks down upon it with unspeakable things in his eyes. I would be jealous, if I were Miss Haas. Yet he adores his Theo. He sings sonnets to her, and gazes up to her with infinite devotion.

"But this, my dear, is only the beginning. *We had a wedding; and in three days.* There was no time to tell anybody, though I should have sent for you had not your letter told me that you were in the city with Harry.

"Miss Haas was stupendous in a white dress (which she bought ready-made). The girls got flowers and cake. The little man would have hugged his violin through the entire ceremony if we had n't torn it from him. They went off on the "Germania" the next day, the mother as happy as anybody.

"Miss Haas left her blessing and two of her busts for you. She parted from her beetles and the galvanic battery without a murmur. It was the funniest thing to see her. She was as absorbed in the little musician as she had ever been in Plato.

"There is ever so much more to tell you about it. You must come and hear it. The spring is lovely, and we have a pony. Rufus is not his name, but he is a nice, little black fellow, and you will like him. We want Harry, too. Tell him there are acres of sketching for him.

"We are missing the good professor. The day after the wedding, he left us suddenly. His old friend, Charley Erskine, of whom you may have heard him speak, is dying of consumption. He has no friend nearer than the professor, who was good to him in some way long ago, and he wrote begging that he might die with him. The professor left everything and went. They are at Fayal or thereabouts now, and Mr. Erskine failing at last accounts.

"Here is the end of my paper, and so good-bye. Deborah says let us hear soon that you and Harry are coming.

"Yours, MARIA PRESCOTT."

" If on our daily course, our mind
Be set to hallow all we find,
New treasures still, of countless price,
God will provide for sacrifice."

CHAPTER XII.

HARRY remained at Oxford through the summer, but the young housekeeper, on pickles and preserves intent, went back to X—— in July. At least, pickles and preserves were the reasons which she rendered for this movement, and it would have been hard for her to give another. Yet, pleasant as the visit had been, she was conscious of a certain weariness even of dear old Oxford. A restlessness, such as she had never felt, had come upon her this summer. She wished she could go away—far away—to see new sights and live a new life. She wished she could do something—something new, hard, great.

The fact is, the young woman had reached that age at which young women in general either marry, or teach school, or begin to write for the newspapers. Neither of these resources seemed open to her. In fact, neither of them definitely presented itself to her mind. Going to Europe is a safe and agreeable opiate often used in such cases. But, to tell the truth, and contradictory as it may appear, Miss Roberts did not care about going to Europe this year. She thought it would be better for her to wait awhile, and read a little more, and brush up her French and German. Besides, in the present state of the H. F. and E.'s (which had previously taken a downward tendency, but would come up again, Mr. Cropper said), it was clearly impossible to go as she wished to go, and taking Harry.

But—and just—here was the rub—it was high time that Harry should go. Professor Poussin had said so more than once. The gentlemen at the Academy had confirmed him. One of these professors was to spend next winter in Rome, and had come up to X——, before he sailed, expressly to say that he hoped to see Harry there, and that Miss Roberts would be made most welcome in the little circle of artists' families. The boy's progress really demanded this step. His pictures had become quite well known, and some of them had sold for good prices. Moreover, this was what she had always promised him. His mind was evidently much on the subject now.

His bright eyes grew brighter when Rome was mentioned, and he pored over the "Stones of Venice" and "Italian Painters."

But it would be an expensive thing — the outfit, the long stay in large cities, the lessons under foreign masters, the whole tour of the continent, which must come in somewhere during the two year's absence. Whether it would be right to let Harry go without her into the midst of a circle of people she knew little about, whether his other studies could be faithfully attended to where all was art; whether, even if the way were clear in other respects, she could meet the requisite expense; whether, by any stretch of economy, she could go herself; and whether, if she could, she must,— these were serious and puzzling questions.

She had never denied her boy anything. Indeed, he had never been obliged to ask for anything yet. But his eyes had been pleading for this all summer. It was hard to say him nay. It was the harder because he would be so good about it.

Though entirely ignorant of the change in her circumstances, and of the sacrifices she had made for him, the boy's heart was full of grateful loyalty toward the sister he had found in Helen He believed her right in every thing. He admired her beyond measure. He felt that he could never do quite enough for her. He was a proud boy and a happy one when he brought her the hundred dollars for the first picture he sold, and begged that she would give herself some little things to keep near her and remind her how he loved her. He never knew, and perhaps the young lady herself never fully knew, what he had been to her during all this time. When Mrs. Moore gave him to her that February evening, she had given more than the occupation and company that Helen thought of. She had given that something to live for which every human creature needs, that something to love and care for without which a woman cannot live.

Burdened, then, with these cares about Harry, and weighed upon by her own nameless malady, the long summer days passed over Helen's head. She pickled and preserved, she read her daily "Tribune," she looked over her autumn dresses.

"I am growing into a horrid, common-place old maid," she exclaimed one day in a fright, and after that she practiced lustily, and lay on her lounge with a book in her hand, by the hour, and set up late at night bending over her old German grammar, or the padlocked-book. But still the days went stupidly. Every body was out of X——. There was nobody to call. Nothing happened. September brought Harry home. Helen thought she read disappointment in his face. He began his lessons at the academy again. The days were still stupid. Nothing happened yet. But all of a sudden, one day, three things happened. They were small things, to be sure.

In the first place, a lady called. It was an old friend of Mr. Saxton's, a lady from out of town. She had pretty gray hair and merry black eyes. She was a capital talker, and spent a long morning with Helen on the library sofa. "We had such a charming winter—all over the South, you know, and into the queerest little nooks and corners. And—oh, by the way—do you happen to know of any two girls who want to do good and have a very nice time? We found the Petersons—two Philadelphia girls—very refined and cultivated. They were living in the drollest, prettiest little place, right on the water, in an old hospital barrack fitted up, teaching the freed people. They were under the care of a charming Dr. ——, —I forget his name—who lived two miles away. They had a large school, and enjoyed it hugely. They have been there two years, but the elder is to be married this autumn, and Mary won't go without her. They want to find somebody nice to take their place. I didn't know but you might know of somebody in X——."

"I don't, I am sure," said Helen, considering a moment, and the lady passed on to something else.

In the afternoon Helen went out for a drive. It was rather dull and lonely, and she thought of getting Miss Hurlburt or Susy to go with her, but, unfortunately, not till she was in quite another quarter of the city, and knew she could not reach them before tea-time. As she drove up to her own house, Mr. Cropper, with his gold-headed cane, came along the avenue. He stopped to say a word about the H. F. & E.'s, and that being finished, looked up to the handsome house standing full in the sunshine, and cast a contemplative eye along its broad front. "A valuable piece of property," he remarked. "A place that will sell well at any time or rent to great advantage. I had an interview this morning with a gentleman who wishes to rent a furnished house on the avenue—a wealthy man, able to pay any price. If you had been going abroad, as you once proposed, such a chance would have been worth looking at."

In the evening Mrs. Mitchell came in. She was just from the sea-side and full of business, for they had decided to go to Europe, and were to engage passage in a day or two. "I came to talk to you about it, dear," she said. "We want you to go with us—you and Harry. You know we enjoyed Harry so much that summer in the mountains. Katy has become quite attached to him at the academy, and it would be so pleasant for them to keep along together in their lessons. Then, my son, the young minister, you know, is going with us, and he would attend to Harry's studies, if you chose. He is going to give the girls regular lessons. Do go, my dear. We shall all enjoy you so much, and the change will do you good."

Miss Roberts answered only in rather discouraging generalities, and promises to "think about it."

The fact is, she was thinking so very hard about it that she was unable to say any thing.

"I shall not let you off so. We shall see you again, Katy or I," said the friendly lady, leaving. She saw that, for some reason or other, to-night was a poor time to press her suit.

Helen went up stairs as soon as her visitor left, glad that Harry's slight head-ache had sent him early to his room. There was no studying of the German grammar, or writing in the padlock-book to-night. She went to bed, slept a little, and waked to hear the city clocks striking eleven. Then the katydids piped away undisturbed for awhile. The young lady under the down coverlet was not very sleepy.

Suddenly, like one flash of light, the three events of the day crossed her mind. She sat up in the bed with a sort of gasp at the new idea. How wonderfully they fitted in! What a perfectly simple plan grew out of them! What did it mean? Was there any thing but *that* that it could mean? Of course, the Mitchells were just the people. Of course, the rent of this house and furniture, added to what came from other sources, would be more than enough to give Harry a magnificent time. Of course, what was left over would be enough for her there—in that charming place by the sea—"quite out of the world, my dear; no expenses at all, so to speak; why, the Petersons had actually lived under the delusion that over-skirts were going out of fashion till I came," Mrs. Ames has said. The quick thoughts flew about and had the whole year planned out in five minutes. But suddenly there was another flash and sharper than the first. *This* winter—oh! she had forgotten—she didn't see how she could very well, just now. Away down there by the sea, too! It must be forlorn. It might be very bad for her health. She certainly ought not to decide such a thing rashly. The clocks went on striking all that night, and the katydids piping between. When the daylight had put the katydids asleep, and the clocks were striking seven, they might have seen, if they had eyes as good as their voices, a young lady at the secretary busily writing notes. Harry comes in, and she lifts her face to give him his morning kiss. It is a bright face. She is feeling bright this morning. There may be a sore feeling down in her heart, as of something wrenched suddenly away, and the pain not quite forgotten yet. Still, it is wonderful how the restlessness has gone; it is wonderful how unclouded the eyes have grown. She finishes the notes, reads them over, and seals them. One of them runs thus:

"MR. CROPPER: Dear Sir,—If the gentleman whom you mentioned to me yesterday has not found a house, I think it likely I can accommodate him. Can he wait till to-morrow evening for a definite offer?"

The other is almost as brief.

"DEAR MRS. AMES,—I think I may know of somebody for your southern school. When must the work begin, about what are the ordinary everyday expenses for the year, and how long can you give me to find out whether the young ladies I am thinking of will go?"

The unconscious Harry, on his way to the morning train, left the notes at Mr. Cropper's office and at the hotel.

Miss Roberts meanwhile washed the breakfast things more speedily than usual. There was a deal to be done before matters could be decided. She had Rufus and the phaeton at the door by nine o'clock, and drove first to the doctor's. The kind old gentleman was just starting out on his daily rounds, but turned back to his office willingly.

"It is n't often I get a visit from a nice young lady. Come in, my dear." And he rolled up the big chair, seated himself in it, and drew her on to his knee.

"I wanted to ask you a question, doctor," began the young lady, a little bashfully. "I am thinking of leaving X——, of going to the south."

"Going to get married?—well, that's the way with all of them," and the old gentleman pinched her cheek.

"No, sir," said Helen, quickly.

"No? Well, let's hear about it, my dear," said the doctor, changing his tone in an instant, and listening to her story with a kind and serious face.

"I was n't sure whether you would think me strong enough," she said in conclusion, and a little faintly.

The doctor had quite a time wiping his spectacles before he answered. Then he trotted her on his knee as he had done a thousand times before.

"The conies are a feeble folk, yet they build their houses in the rocks," he said at last, with his pleasant smile. "You're not a Goliath, to be sure, and I declare, when I think of some of the times I've pulled you through when you were a baby. But you bore the yoke in your youth, my dear. You are well now—you're sound—sound as a nut. I've been watching you now for three years, and I'm proud of you. You are just as well as anybody, and likely to be. As to climate," he continued, after another series of trottings, "I know that region. It's a pretty good one. There's no malaria about there. I don't like a southern climate for northern constitutions, but for a year or so, and with proper precaution there's no danger. I don't know that I can, in conscience, say anything against it. I know Dr. Curtis, too. A fine fellow, and well up in his profession. He'll take good care of you. As for the work, it won't hurt you if you don't overdo. It does girls good to work—at least, girls like you. Take a little quinine occasionally, and don't let things worry you—that kills more people than anything else, and—you're a good girl, God bless you."

The trotting stopped suddenly, and the doctor got up, which movement naturally resulted in Miss Roberts getting down. He made a rush for his hat and opened the door for Helen to pass out. There was no time to thank him. Indeed, Helen was not altogether sure that that very peculiar sinking sensation within her was indicative of gratitude. But by the time she had reached Shady street she had lost a good deal of it.

Susy Converse was at her window and saw Helen coming, her blue veil flying merrily behind her. She folded her work, came down stairs and stood on the pavement, as the little basket-carriage drew up. But she was not at all prepared for the announcement that came from under the blue veil.

"Susy Converse, I'm going on a pilgrimage, and I want you to go with me. Will you? I'm in earnest. Just get your hat, please, and come with me and I will tell you all about it."

Susy brought her hat and heard the tale.

This was very much the sort of thing she had been looking for. Indeed, she had sometimes thought of going south alone. She did not care for money now. And with Helen—of course it would be delightful. These were the words she said, and they sounded quite encouraging. Her tone, however, was not so much so. It had a certain reservation in it. Susy herself was conscious of it, and like a spirited girl as she was, a good deal vexed by it. What if that light-haired young man did think it strange? She was sure he would. He certainly acted very peculiarly. But if he would persist in calling on Miss Hurlburt every evening, and sitting in the stiff little boarding-house parlor, till that worthy lady almost fell asleep, she did n't know that that was any reason why *she* should stay at home. She presumed Miss Hurlburt would be just as happy to see him after she was gone. Besides, of course, what were the movements of a poor sewing-girl to him? He was the head-clerk of a large establishment, an intelligent, fine young man, and received in good society.

"Yes, I believe I will go," she said, at last, and in a much more satisfactory tone. "You intend to engage for only one year?"

"That is all."

"Then I will go if you do. You may depend on me."

"Thank you, Susy. I'm sure I could never go without you," and it was Miss Roberts' tone now that was not encouraging.

"Please tell nobody but Miss Hurlburt, at least, nobody but particular friends," she added, bethinking herself, for she had happened to meet the light-haired young man calling on Miss Hurlburt more than once.

The head-clerk was electrified into a much longer call than usual that evening, and the next evening did not inquire for Miss Hurlburt at all. The amount of it all was, that Susy, coming up the crazy old stairs very late, and creeping carefully past Miss Hurlburt's door, was very much astonished when that good woman opened the door full upon her, and greeted her with a hearty kiss and a heartier laugh.

"And is n't it funny," she said, five minutes afterwards, lifting her head from the friendly shoulder where she had been having a good cry, "is n't it funny that he should have been waiting all this time, thinking that I would n't care anything about him because he was nothing but a clerk? He feels so sorry about my going away. Still we both think it may be all for the best. He will be one of the firm by the time I come back."

"Yes, and the years go quickly to happy hearts," said the dear old maid, making a happy heart all the happier for the simple words.

But we are not to neglect Helen, who went home after that drive with Susy and found an answer to one of her notes in the shape of Mr. Cropper himself and the gentleman who was looking for a house. This seemed amazingly like business, and the young mistress opened the doors and showed her handsome apartments with a strangely uncomfortable feeling, something like what she had always supposed homesickness to be. It grew worse when the gentleman expressed his perfect satisfaction with everything, and offered a liberal price should she decide to let him have the house.

But there was no time to nurse sentiment. Mrs. Ames' answer had come and brought the requisite information. Miss Mitchell had called, Bridget said, and left word that she was coming again.

"I'm glad I was n't here. I'm not ready to see her yet," said the young lady to herself.

"There is only one more day to work in. I believe I had better go to Mitty this very afternoon."

She had a short conference with the girls in the kitchen, wrote a note to Harry, changed her dress, packed a little bag, and stopped for a moment at the Mitchells' door on her way to the four o'clock train. About eight, she took her tea with Mitty, having very much astonished that worthy matron by her sudden appearance. Mitty readily agreed to another year away from X-——. She did not appear to be pining for the housekeeper's life and state. Sairy Jane was still feeble, and the grandmother's annuity evidently went a good way in the little house. Helen slept in a strange room, with a wonderful flowery fire-board, and a solemn sense of perfect newness over everything. She had an early breakfast, and started soon after it for Oxford. She would not do what she was thinking of doing without consulting her best friends. Her stay with them must be very brief. She drove up under the elm-trees about eleven o'clock. She must leave immediately after dinner.

Miss Maria, who always busy, was yet always at leisure, sat down at once by her side on the sofa, took the tired child right into her arms, and heard the unfolding of the new plans with many a tender caress. Miss Prescott shortened her last morning recitation to join the council, and said wise and comforting things in her own precious, quiet way.

"It is all settled now. There is only the getting ready," thought Helen, as they left her alone for a moment before dinner, and she looked up into the arches as she had looked into them from the same window four years ago when she first came to school. Ah, well, things were new then. Things are new now. I shall go through these as I went through those. And be happy, too? Yes, and be happy, too.

She asked about Professor Wright. He had not come home yet, but was expected soon — next week, probably.

"Please give my good-bye to him," she said, and privately resolved that she would write a little letter and tell him how sorry she was about the Greek lessons.

The news of Miss Roberts's contemplated departure spread rapidly, as news would spread even in well-bred X——. Happily, almost everybody thought she was going abroad, and congratulated, while they politely deplored, accordingly. She was wicked enough not always to set people right on this point. Some, however, learned the true state of the case, and more a part of it.

"Katy Mitchell tells me you are not going with them," said Mrs. Solomon Jones, meeting Helen at Haberdasher's. Where are you going, dear?"

"Oh, to 'the land east of the sun and west of the moon,'" said Helen, laughing. "I don't know yet all I shall do before Harry comes home. I'm going to look about a little and see what there is out of X——."

"Yes, that's just it," said the ready lady, sympathetically,—"in search of a new sensation. One does get so bored going over the same old track; and you've been abroad once or twice, I believe (which was a mistake, by the way). I was telling Mr. Jones the other day that I should certainly die of *ennui* if that Pacific Railway were not finished this summer."

The Rev. Mr. Parley heard the news, of course. By diligent and persistent efforts he had got the whole story, or as much as she knew of it, out of Miss Hurlburt. He came around at once. Morning calls were quite the thing at X——, and, if they had not been, the minister would have called all the same. "Moral heroism," "nobility of character," "loftiness of spirit"—these were poor and tame words to express this gentleman's conception of the step Miss Roberts was about to take. But he was afraid it was a mistaken zeal. Would she not consider? A young lady so delicately brought up—an influence so much needed in higher circles.

"We cannot spare you, Miss Roberts. The church needs you. I need you." The brisk, little man had grown very red and excited, and now clasped his hands and dropped pathetically on his knees before her.

"Oh, *please* don't, Mr. Parley. Indeed I am very busy this morning. I believe you must excuse me. I will see you again," cried Helen, rising, and almost as red as the minister.

But Mr. Parley *did*, and five minutes afterwards walked down the avenue a sadder and a wiser man.

Miss Roberts was busy to be sure. Her school was to begin the very first of October. Harry was to sail with the Mitchells some days before that. With a hundred housewifely cares on her face, and arrayed, in what Mitty used to call "riggimentals," the young lady explored the house from garret to cellar, putting closets in order, packing away choice things, and taking an inventory of all her possessions.

One morning she was sitting on the parlor floor in the midst of various piles of music, when that thing happened which often happens in story-books and occasionally in real life. The door suddenly opened and a tall gentleman walked in. Bridget, brushing the door-blinds, had admitted him without a word of warning. To tell the truth, Miss Roberts was too pleased to think much about the "riggimentals." The "little letter," though it was a very little and simple one, had brought the good professor down to say good-bye. He could stay but a few hours. Perhaps that was too long, for she must be very busy.

"I am not busy at all, so long as you can stay," she said, honestly, and was very much ashamed of herself the next instant for being so ridiculously honest. "There is a piano in the schoolroom, and I am looking out some music to take with me," she added, nonchalantly.

The tall professor bent over the piano with her and helped in the looking out. Then he sat down near her to talk. He was, as usual, kind and grave, kinder than usual, indeed: and though he seemed sorry, too, about the Greek lessons, less grave than she had sometimes seen him.

He asked such friendly and interested questions about her plans and Harry's, and, before long, she found herself talking very freely to him, more freely almost than she had talked with Miss Prescott and Miss Maria.

He listened with a face growing kinder and kinder. Somehow it seemed the most natural thing in the world for her to be telling him about her affairs, and he gave her very strongly this morning that feeling of being taken care of that he had given her sometimes before. The brown eyes looked into his, child-like and confident. At the same time, there was never so much womanliness and strength in them.

"It seemed the right thing to do, and I am sure I shall enjoy it," she said, at the end of the long, familiar talk.

The professor rose and paced slowly up and down the long room for answer. When he came back, he asked particularly about the comforts she had provided for her winter. Had she reading enough, and of the right kind? No; she must not take her German books. Such times were no times for hard study. She must have books of poetry and fiction, and plenty of current literature. Was there a boat on the place? Was Rufus going?

She answered doubtfully about Rufus, but Mrs. Ames had said there was a boat.

"And now I am going to ask you to sing for me, if you are not too tired. Some of the old Oxford pieces."

He looked over the music himself and found them. "Only one more," he said at last, and he placed it before her. It was that simple, sweet *aria* from "Elijah," "Oh, trust in the Lord, wait patiently for Him, and He shall give thee thy heart's desire." Helen was always very fond of it, yet somehow she would rather not have tried it to-day. The words would catch in her throat a little towards the last. Her voice would not keep quite steady, and when she was done, it was hard to look up at once. Professor Wright had sat near her, with his head bowed and resting on his hands. There was something very quiet and beautiful in his plain face as he rose, when she had done, and stepped towards the singer. He laid his broad hand on her forehead, and then stooped and kissed her there.

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face to shine upon thee; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon thee, and give thee *peace*," he said, in his solemn voice.

It was a face very full of peace that lifted itself after a little hushed pause. It was a voice that had a wonderful quality of brightness in it that said:

"And now, Professor Wright, if you must go by that train, it is time to be moving. Harry and I are going out directly after dinner, and we will take you down."

She left him, and Harry soon came in. There was a quiet cheeriness at that little dinner-table, that was noticeable even to the waiting Bridget. Nobody talked a great deal, but Harry's face was bright with his new prospects, and the two others had a kind of calm sunshine on them, like that which the September fields showed without.

The carriage was at the door when they were done, and they went to the train at once. They said good-bye with clear and quiet voices. The professor dropped into the first seat in the car he entered, and looked out to see the waving of a small, brown-gloved hand, and Harry's merry bow as he moved away.

All through the day and all through the week, that peace remained on Helen Roberts' face. Her eyes kept that clear, deep look. Her voice kept that wonderful quality of brightness. Harry had never seen so much in her face to love as when he looked at her last from the deck of the *Oceanica*, and wiped the not unmanly tears from his handsome eyes.

The Mitchells said, "How bright she looks! I hope she will enjoy it as much as she expects to."

"You needn't tell me," said Miss Hurlburt to her clock and her kittens, the night after the girls had started, "you needn't tell me. If ever anybody was being set apart, and made meet, and led right straight along, it's that dear child. Such a light as there was in her face to-day, and such a voice! I know very well that such clear skies don't come without some thunder-storms. And yet I don't understand it. His ways are past finding out sometimes. And there's that good man. Why, I saw how it was just as plain as daylight. I saw it in his face the minute I spoke her name. And when she came in, how he watched her, and how hungry his eyes looked! I've seen such things before. And she, little unconscious lamb, never thought of such a thing! But I know how 'tis well enough, for when I told her how I liked his sermons, her face grew just as bright and rosy and her eyes shone, and she didn't say a single word. Such a blessed good man as he is, too! I declare it's a mystery to me. But I guess the Lord knows his own business. He's taken care of you for pretty nigh fifty years, Jerushy Hurlburt, and it's a pretty time of day for you to begin to distrust him now."

Helen's own thoughts the next day on the windy deck of the southward bound steamer, were not unlike Miss Hurlburt's of the night before. Only she did not express them in just the same way. She was not altogether conscious of them as her own thoughts at all, but singing through her head, all the morning long, went the words of one of her favorite poems:

"The wind ahead, the billows high,
A whited wave but sable sky,
And many a league of tossing sea
Between the hearts I love and me.

"The wind ahead: day after day
These weary words the sailors say;
To weeks the days are lengthened now—
Still mounts the surge to meet our prow.

"Through longing day and lingering night
I still accuse Time's lagging flight,
Or gaze out o'er the envious sea,
That keeps the hearts I love from me.

"Yet, ah, how shallow is all grief!
How instant is the deep relief!
And what a hypocrite am I,
To feign forlorn, to 'plain and sigh!

"The wind ahead? The wind is free!
Forever more it favoreth me—
To shores of God still blowing fair,
O'er seas of God my bark doth bear.

"This surging brine *I* do not sail,
This blast adverse is not *my* gale;
'Tis here I only seem to be,
But really sail another sea;

"Another sea, pure sky its waves,
Whose beauty hides no heaving graves—
A sea all haven, whereupon
No hapless bark to wreck hath gone.

"The winds that o'er my ocean run
Reach through all heavens beyond the sun;
Through life and death, through fate, through time,
Grand breaths of God they sweep sublime

"Eternal trades, they cannot veer
And blowing, teach us how to steer.
Ah! well for him whose joy, whose care,
Is but to keep before them fair.

"Oh, thou, God's mariner, heart of mine,
Spread canvas to the airs divine!
Spread sail! and let thy Fortune be
Forgotten in thy Destiny!"

. . . .

"So life must live, and soul must sail,
And Unseen over Seen prevail,
And all God's argosies come to shore,
Let ocean smile, or rage and roar.

"And so, 'mid storm or calm, my bark
With snowy wake still nears her mark;
Cheerly the trades of being flow,
And sweeping down the wind I go?"

Over and over, over and over, to the music of the engine as it pulled steadily on through the resisting water, she said the words to herself:

"Ah! well for him whose joy, whose care,
Is but to keep before them fair.

. . . .

"Cheerly the trades of being blow,
And sweeping down the wind I go?"

She was alone, except for a few gentlemen, with her hat tied tightly down by her blue veil, and her water-proof wrapped about her. Susy was not much of a sailor, and if a brand new photograph of a pleasant-faced young man (which she was observed to cover up whenever anybody approached) be supposed to be good company, was not much in need of Helen's society in her state-room.

After dinner people began to creep out. More gentlemen came with bad cigars and worse politics. Handsomely dressed ladies came, shivered a few minutes, and went away. Strong-minded looking women came, planted themselves firmly on the little slippery stools, and remained. One of them who sat near Helen and had very dingy fingers, made a desk of her traveling-bag and began to write. Others opened wise-looking books and read. Two plain women, who did none of these things, but sat wrapped in their long water-proofs, and occasionally exchanged a quiet word together, attracted Helen's attention singularly. She found her eyes drawn toward them often. There was something familiar in their plain, good faces. Presently she became conscious that they were speaking of her. Their eyes met again, and one of them rose and came toward her. Of course, she knew them then. They were Miss Smith and Miss Peck, of Platoville memory. How oddly familiar their little ways and sayings seemed! How old it made her feel! They were on their way South, too. They had been three years now in "the work."

Two simple, hard-working, useful women. Miss Smith, behind her spectacles, wore a happy face. Miss Peck's wistful eyes looked satisfied.

"Do tell me about Platoville," said Helen.

They told about the new church and the iron fence around the common.

"How is Mr. Green?"

Miss Smith and Miss Peck looked at one another in a kind of horror.

"Haven't you heard?" at length said Miss Smith, under her breath.

"I have heard nothing since I left there."

"Why, Mr. Green — he's been two years in the penitentiary. It's a dreadful thing."

"What did he do?" asked Helen.

"He was accused of forgery. I believe they didn't prove that against him, but he was committed on a charge of selling prize boxes containing counterfeit ten-cent pieces and poisonous candy. He will be out next year."

"It was a great shock to the entire community," said Miss Peck.

"What has become of Mrs. Green?" asked Helen.

"Oh, Mrs. Green died a year before this happened."

"And Mary?"

"Mary ran away from home with a young fellow who came up from the city one summer. He turned out to be a scoundrel, and she lives a miserable life."

"And Bobby?"

"Bobby is the worst boy in the village. Everybody is afraid of him. He is as wild and bad as a boy can be."

"'The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small,'" thought Helen. "I'm glad that poor woman is at rest any way."

That night they steamed into a region of storms. The wretchedness of the next twenty-four hours! The weariness of that gray, rough water that looked in through their little window. The pitchings and the tossings. The despair with which the girls sat and looked at each other, as their hair-brushes and boots and all the smaller articles of the toilet, chased each other across the state-room floor, and their traveling-bags resisted all attempts at packing.

Susy, who had a way of coming out strong under difficulties, was the first to rally, and was as helpful as possible to Helen. They were to reach their destination at three o'clock in the morning. The stewards fairly carried them down the pitching stair-case, and deposited them tenderly among sacks of meal and molasses casks.

Out on the pier in the cold, gray morning — the waves plashing loudly all around, the wind blowing, the lighted steamer making off in its heavy way as fast as possible; — not another creature that suggested life to be seen or heard. The girls sat down on their trunks and looked at each other.

"We are on a raft, floating off to the end of the world," said Susy.

But, presently, there was a tramp of horses at the end of the long pier. A black spot appeared in the gray, and out of the dimness came a high wagon with two figures on the front seat, and shawls and wraps hanging from it in grotesque confusion.

"So sorry to be a moment late," said the doctor, coming out with a bound. "Miss Roberts, I presume, and Miss Converse? Bundle yourselves right in, ladies. Here, you, two trunks. Chilly mornings, very, and a dreadful place to get to, this, I don't doubt you are thinking. Now, will you come to breakfast in a bachelor's quarters, or will you go to Aunt Hepsy, in your own barracks?"

The girls preferred to go to any place that they could call their own. Aunt Hepsy had a bright little fire, a cup of tea, and plenty of fresh water. "Now, honeys, better not look 'round till you've been to sleep. Time enough for that when you get rested."

So, when the gray streak in the east was beginning to be touched with pink, and the birds were just waking up, the tired girls crept into their little white beds.

It was a late breakfast-hour when Helen came out. Susy, thrifty little soul, was up before her, and doing what she could to give a home-like look to things. The round breakfast-table, with a white cloth, stood before an open window. There was nothing like a vase to be found, but Susy had filled a cup and saucer with morning-glories, and aunty's toast and tea gave out inviting odors. It was droll, as Mrs. Ames had said. The rough pine boards of the old barracks had been smoothed and oiled, and were adorned here and there with small pictures and mottoes that the Petersons had left. There were some rough book-shelves waiting to be filled. There was a matting on the floor, and a lounge with a calico cover, across the corner by the fireplace. The woodbine made the prettiest of curtains at the windows. Out of these windows, on the one side, Helen saw the long, low, unpainted school-house; on the other, the blue waters of the bay. Before the door, which opened directly out of the room, stood a high pole with a heavy bell attached at the top, to be rung by an arrangement somewhat like an old-fashioned well-sweep.

"And where is our parish?" said Helen.

"Right out here," and they went to the door.

Susy pulled a spray of honeysuckle from above their heads and twined it lovingly in her friend's hair. Helen, resting both hands lightly on Susy's arm, stood with the pretty, clinging grace that was all her own, looking out on the strange, new scene — across the sparkling water, along the line of dark pine woods, over settlements of little brown houses, back to Susy's friendly eyes. "My dear, I think we shall be very happy here. Now let us have some breakfast."

The girls were very happy. In the first place, there was the novelty, and the picturesqueness, and the richness every way. When the old well-sweep first performed its solemn duties under

Susy's inexperienced hand, and the children came flocking as thick as huckleberries in answer to the bell, the animation of the young teachers knew no bounds. The old barracks filled up, almost instantly with eager, curious faces. It was so altogether entertaining to get the little scraps of personal history out of them as their names went down in the big record-book. It was so altogether impossible to remember their names. To call upon Violetta Victoria Penelope Jackson, looking hard at a certain individual in a certain corner, and have the individual looked at meekly rise and declare herself to be Britannia Aurelia Maria Johnson, while the silent apparition of Violetta Victoria loomed up in a distant part of the room: this was simply an event of hourly occurrence for the first few days.

Susy was invaluable in the school-room. She had a thorough understanding of school machinery, and was mistress of a thousand arts and devices by which to make things run pleasantly and smoothly. She marched the pupils out and in in a wonderful way, while Helen played "Hail Columbia" with all her might on the asthmatic old piano. She got up the most delightful general exercises, and gave object-lessons for which the pupils brought daily a diverting variety of "objects." Helen, for her part, devoted herself to the three R's and to the general business, and for the first few weeks, at least, inclined to the opinion that teaching was the most delightful employment in the world.

Altogether, a volume might be filled with the rare, and curious, and funny, and pathetic things the girls saw and heard that winter in their little parish. But I have no idea of inflicting such a volume on my gentle reader.

There were things outside of the people and the work to be enjoyed. The country was charming, notwithstanding the lack of hills. The girls brought home armfuls of yellow jessamine and trumpet-creeper, when the snow lay over the northern fields, and their room was fragrant with roses at Christmas. Helen had no time to miss Rufus, for about a week after she arrived the doctor rode over one day with a white pony behind him. The pony had been sent for Miss Roberts, and Uncle Tom was to keep him close by. A letter the next morning told more about him.

"When a man six feet tall and a grave old theologue at that, comes into possession of a little white pony, pray what is he to do but to get some of his friends to take it off his hands? I hope you and Silver will like each other well, and have some pleasant times together, and I think you will pardon me if, in my desire that this should be so, I have taken a liberty."

Then the water, right out of their windows—always there, never the same. Sometimes it was a sheet of blue and silver—sometimes a living sapphire—sometimes flashing steel. Sometimes it was black and angry, with the white-capped waves tumbling over each other in a tumult. Sometimes it was a dull gray, silent as death, and the mist lying like a thin veil over its cheek. Sometimes, at sunset, it was clear, pure gold; again it was mother-of-pearl. Sometimes the little oyster-boats went out of the bay, their sails all tipped with rose-color. Sometimes they were white-winged birds, flying home on the evening breeze. There was inexpressible comfort and company in it, and the girls learned to watch it and know its moods as one does those of a favorite child.

Everybody was so good about letters, too.

Quite out of the world, though they were, their friends in the world did not forget them. Dear Miss Prescott had never written such long and delightful letters. Miss Maria had the most amusing things to tell. Miss Hurlburt really neglected her kittens, and devoted all her spare moments to getting down the news for the girls.

A few words in a letter from Lily, one day, made Helen very thankful and happy. "And, Helen, dear, I want to tell you what first made me think so much more about these things. Do you remember the words you said to me one night in my room, before I was married? I never forgot them. I kept thinking of them, and could not banish them from my mind. At last I told Henry all about it, and we resolved that we would begin together, and try to lead better lives. He has helped me so much, Helen, and I try to help him, too; and this precious little baby, that God has sent us, will help both of us."

Dora also wrote, and more than once. She was still at the head of her flourishing school. "But next year," she said, "I want to go there with you. Father is doing so well that there is no need of my making money, and I'm going in now for variety and fun. You've no idea what a capital school ma 'am I am, so don't refuse my services till you've tried me. You wonder why you don't get any of those tracts now-a-days. You need n't be saucy, Miss. The fact is, two or three years of good hard work is the best cure I know for some kinds of fevers. I still go in for equal pay and property privileges, and all that; but when it comes to talking about woman's mission and woman's work,—there's enough of that, in all conscience, and I'm not anxious to add to it."

Besides the letters there were papers and periodicals and books of all kinds. How they did come in! All the new books that were worth reading, all the best magazines, all the illustrated papers. Helen's table had never been so full of them. The greater number of these things bore the Oxford postmark, and were directed in a large, familiar hand. One or two letters in the same hand, also came during the winter, and such good letters. Not long, but with a great deal in them; not learned, but full of the choicest wisdom; not funny, but brightening one up indescribably—touching everything, books, politics, local gossip, even, with a bold, strong honest pen, and, above all, with a delightful sense of friendliness all through them.

It would seem that it might have been a happy winter, and, indeed, it was. Sometimes, however, there would be weary days. Sometimes there would come a sinking, hungry, utterly desolate feeling. Peace is sweet, yet human hearts can know more joyous things and sometimes cry out for them.

At these times the best cure was to go off over the water in the little boat, alone, except for the quiet oarsman, and under the pitying, bending heavens. For hours they would sail on and on.

"Not quite yet, Uncle Tom,—don't take me back quite yet,—it is so beautiful out here."

Sometimes they would go quite across the bay to the old cemetery among the pines. This was a favorite place with both the girls. The paths were tangles of rich, trailing vines. The trees were hung with long, heavy moss. The deserted graves lay desolate, and the eternal sea sang at their feet.

Here, sometimes, Helen would sit for hours, the sea and the pitying heavens speaking softly to her soul. And peace would come back,—that peace which was to be her portion now,—that peace which ought to make her life so rich and sweet.

Susy, in these hard times, as at all times, was the best and kindest of friends. Her own heart had its joys and sorrows, too. The letters, which came almost every day (and had Haberdasher and Williams on their envelopes now), were undoubtedly very welcome; but she would sit sometimes, long after reading them, and look out with a grave face over the sea. It was almost too bad to come away just then. It was pretty hard, and Charley had certainly been very good about it.

One morning, after the brief southern winter was fairly over, when they had had the summer birds with them a month, and roses and honeysuckles were on their breakfast-table, Susy's letter was longer than usual, and left a strange, flushed, half-pleased, half-troubled look on her face after the reading.

Helen, who had nothing but a newspaper this morning, and was lazily sipping her coffee, could not help noticing the look, and all the more when Susy tried very hard to be unconscious, and said something carelessly about being glad that it was Saturday. The flush deepened and the trouble increased at Helen's glance, and, at length, Susy rose hastily and went to the door. Once the reserved Miss Roberts would have thought it intrusion to inquire into the matter. As it was, she hesitated a little, but presently followed her friend to the door.

"What is it, Susy? Is it any thing you can tell me?"

Susy turned around, kissed her, cried a little, laughed a little, and finally opened the letter and showed her a page.

"There, you may see what he says. Of course, I sha'n't do it, though."

Helen read, her face growing bright and pleased:

"Now, Susy, I am going to ask a very great thing of you. I hope you will be willing to grant it. I am to go South on business for the firm next month. I shall stop and see you, of course, and I want—I want very much, dear Susy—to take you home with me. Now don't be shocked and say it is impossible, the first thing. Just think of it, please. I know you are a sensible girl, and have no foolish ideas about millinery and that sort of thing. Never mind about that. There's plenty of that in X——, you know. And I can have our little house all ready for you. I have seen one to-day that is just the thing. If it were not so near the end of the term, I would not ask so great a favor of Miss Roberts, but it seems to me she can get along, somehow, through the remaining six weeks. Don't you think she can? Please ask her for me."

"Of course, I sha'n't do any such thing," reiterated Susy, when Helen looked up. "In the first place, I would n't leave you for anything."

"Of course, you sha'n't. Of course, you shall, my dear. I can get along beautifully. I'll give the little classes to Violetta, and attend to the rest myself. Why, you have no idea how smart I am. You've done so much that you've given me no chance. And it will be the nicest thing. I shall have a chance to wear my finery, and *what* a day it will be for the little brown houses. I shall write to Mr. Williams myself this very day. And, Susy,—do you see now what that lavender poplin was for?"

So Susy did it. The minister from across the bay sailed over in a little white boat to perform the ceremony. The doctor came, of course. The school children crowded around the little room, and looked in at the low windows. The bride and bridegroom stood before one of the woodbine curtains, and the blue water made a pretty back-ground. Out of the door, under the trees, the long tables held generous supplies of cake and candy for the whole little community, and if ever anybody has a prettier wedding, may I be there to see.

After Susy had gone, Helen was wonderfully brave and light-hearted. School went on well, and everything prospered. Hard work suited her she believed. She was as happy as a child.

But towards the close of the term troubles came; real and serious troubles. The summer grew hot and oppressive. The rains delayed to come. The south wind blew fiery and pestilent. Sickness crept into the little community, fever of a malignant kind. There was death in some of the little brown houses almost every day. The school grew very thin, but Helen had the bell rung every day, and the few children that collected were left under the care of Violetta, while she and Silver were on their sad and weary rounds through the hot and crowded alleys of the wretched little settlement. Tales of misery and horror grew familiar to her eyes and ears, new and hard lessons were to be learned in these dreadful days. The doctor came over and took up quarters in an unappropriated apartment of the school-house. He worked hard and faithfully for the suffering people. He looked carefully in Helen's face every morning, felt her pulse, and gave her occasionally some little preventive. But through all this fearful time she was perfectly well, and very brave and happy. For three weeks the sickness continued. Then the blessed north wind came and brought a healing breath. The long, sad lines of mourners walking across the burning fields to the little cemetery grew less frequent. The sick ones crept out into the air and light. The school filled up. The doctor told Helen good-bye, and rode off home again. There were only one or two lingering cases now, and Helen knew perfectly well what to do for them. The trouble was over, and Helen, with a heart all the braver for its thankfulness, took up the remaining work of the term.

The doctor had been gone but a day or two, when Helen lay on her lounge one evening with a fresh "Atlantic" in her hand. She had been trying to read, but the sweet odors and the softened sounds of the summer evening had something in them to keep her mind awake, and she found the next day that only a leaf or two had been cut. Aunt Hepsy was sitting on her kitchen door-step singing, the sea flashed with a low, pleasant sound against the shore, and she heard the distant whistle of the evening steamer coming down the bay. She thought of the mail it was bringing. It was time to hear from Oxford again. What had become of Miss Prescott?

It was nearly nine o'clock when there came a knock at her door. "Uncle Tom to tell me that that poor baby is dead," thought Helen; "Come in." And the door opened. But it was not Uncle Tom.

"Oh, Professor Wright!" The professor did not say a word, but put down his little black bag, crossed the floor at a stride, and took both her hands as she rose to meet him. "Why, how astonished I am, and how glad I am," said Helen, with a face like sunshine. "Did you come on that boat? And I was wondering if it had any letters for me."

There are times when it is n't easy for a man to speak, and then the professor was naturally awkward, as we know very well. All that he seemed capable of was to utter one or two inarticulate words at first, and then to ask questions.

"Are you well?" he said, looking deep down into Helen's brown eyes.

"Yes, sir, perfectly well," said Helen, growing suddenly a little nervous, and very much at a loss for anything to say by way of filling up the pause that ensued.

"Are you very glad to see me?" looking still deeper.

"Yes, and I'm going to prove it by getting you a cup of tea," said the young lady, starting off. The professor protested.

"Oh, I know all about those steamboat suppers. Do you suppose I am going to have my friends come to see me and not offer them the hospitalities of my humble cabin. Aunty—" and she vanished.

Helen was very busy and very lively when she came back, and aunty dropped her deepest curtsey at the stranger when she came in with the toast and tea. It was a cosy little repast at the round table in the corner. The professor recovered from his dazed condition and ate and drank like a hungry man that he was, and told the latest news from Oxford, and stated, a little to Helen's surprise, that he had not delivered those lectures in X—— last winter.

After tea they had a long talk. When at last he rose to go (aunty had made a place for him in the doctor's deserted quarters), the good man once more laid his hand on Helen's brown hair, and kissed and blessed her on the forehead. Then, throwing a strong arm around the slender figure, "I would not tell you these things a year ago," he said, "because I so honored and reverenced in my heart the loving spirit that had taken this service upon itself, I would not disturb it by a perhaps unwelcome thought of me. I thought that God would have me share the sacrifice by giving up this great desire and hope one year longer; and I prayed Him that if He willed to give me this blessing, He would keep my treasure for me."

THE END.

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